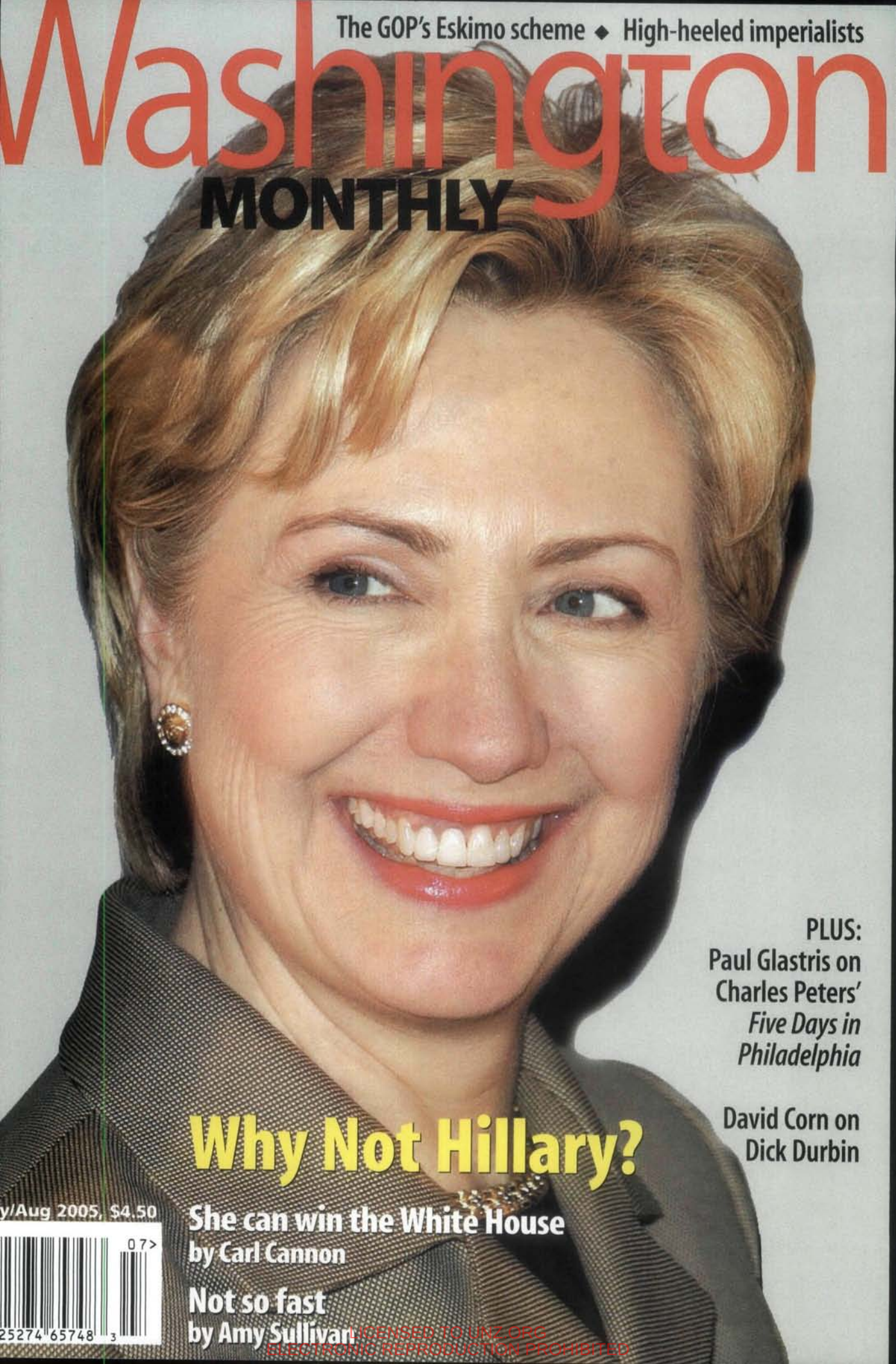
The GOP's Eskimo scheme ◆ High-heeled imperialists

Washington MONTHLY



PLUS:
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David Corn on Dick Durbin

Why Not Hillary?

She can win the White House
by Carl Cannon

Not so fast
by Amy Sullivan

y/Aug 2005, $4.50

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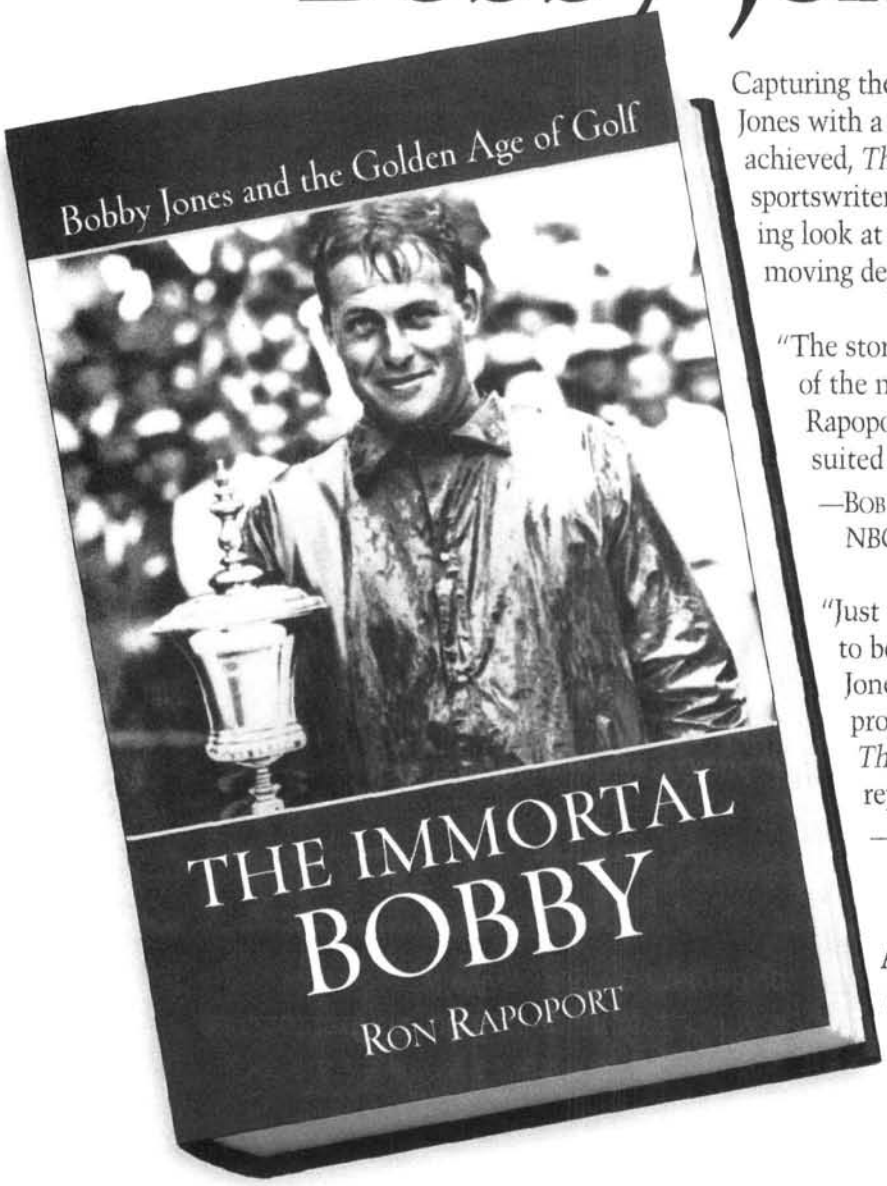
The true story behind the legend of Bobby Jones.



Capturing the story of revered golf giant Bobby Jones with a depth and richness never before achieved, *The Immortal Bobby*, by award-winning sportswriter Ron Rapoport, offers both a penetrating look at the man behind the legend and a moving depiction of a long-gone sporting age.

"The story of Bobby Jones' singular life is one of the most fascinating in sports history. Ron Rapoport's thoughtful, graceful style is well suited to telling that story."

—BOB COSTAS, Broadcaster
NBC Sports and HBO Sports

"Just when you think there is nothing new to be said or written on the subject of Bob Jones, Ron Rapoport comes along and proves that theory completely untrue. *The Immortal Bobby* is wonderfully reported and superbly written."

—JOHN FEINSTEIN, author of *A Good Walk Spoiled* and *Caddy for Life*

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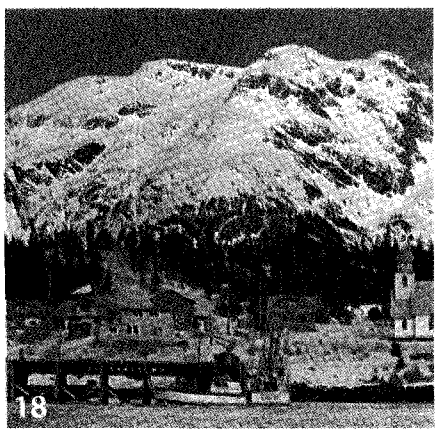
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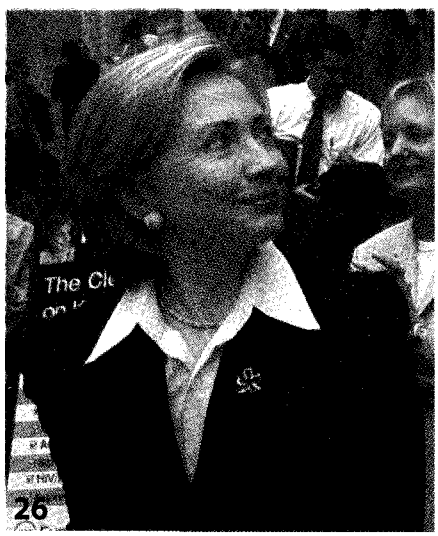
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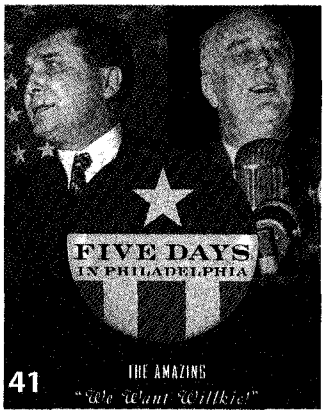

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Letters

In our May issue, we ran a series of essays under the heading ***Middle East Democracy: Who gets the credit? What are the lessons?*** *by leading thinkers and policymakers such as Joseph Biden, Wesley Clark, and Nancy Soderberg. The articles generated a number of responses from readers and an energetic debate on our Web site between political science professors Marc Lynch of Williams College and Dan Drezner of the University of Chicago. For this month's Letters, we include below a sampling of reader reactions, as well as excerpts from the online discussion.*

Middle East Democracy:
Who gets the credit? What are the lessons?

Credit Bush's rhetoric, not his actions

From the mailbag:

Just wanted to send a note expressing my appreciation for Gen. Wesley Clark's article ("War didn't and doesn't bring democracy"). This man seems one of the most rational, intelligent, and credible commentators on U.S. foreign policy. His words help some of us non-Americans remember that there are people in U.S. politics who don't have a cowboy attitude regarding the rest of the world.

Phoebe Tegan
Sydney, Australia

Wesley Clark should remember that war did indeed bring democracy to America and helped preserve it through many conflicts since then. I do agree with some of his comments that America should not take too much public credit for the burgeoning democracies in the Middle East. Yet I also believe that our goals as a democratic society should mesh with those of any society that seeks a truly representative government. I was in Europe at the end of the Cold War serving in the U.S. Air Force, and I have no doubt that President Reagan's call to Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" contributed to the final outcome.

Timothy Heinse
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

Online Exchange:

Marc Lynch, Williams College: Reading through *The Washington Monthly* contributions, I see that Democrats continue to struggle with how to respond to Bush's democracy rhetoric. Attack the idea of spreading democracy (and maybe point out the flaws in motherhood, apple pie, baseball, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, while you're at it), or attack Bush's shortcomings in actually doing it? Me, I agree with Tomasky and Biden and some of the others in this collection. Democrats should embrace the idea of spreading democracy to the Middle East, and point out that once you separate out words from deeds, Bush hasn't really done much to promote democracy. And invading Iraq was a really inefficient, if not counter-productive, way to do it.

The real problem with Bush isn't the nice words about democracy and freedom, it's the flagrant shortcomings and contradictions in practice. Bush hasn't put much money into democracy promotion programs, and the programs he's got—such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative—are deeply dysfunctional. His grand public diplomacy initiative, the Arabic language satellite television station al Hurra, is a costly and irrelevant white elephant, treated as a joke in the region on those rare occasions when anyone actually notices it exists. The administration's hostility towards al Jazeera makes it look terribly hypocritical when it starts talking about media freedoms (which, to be fair, the administration almost never does).

There are also some big double-standard problems. Most Arabs are deeply cynical about American intentions, and they can't help but notice when "useful" Arab countries get a pass. Tunisia invites Ariel Sharon to come visit, and the Bush administration has not a word to say when a human rights activist is sent to jail for publishing an article on the internet describing torture in the Tunisian prisons.

Dan Drezner, University of Chicago: This theme played a key role in Biden's essay and was echoed in many of the other pieces: You need to generously fund the elements of civil society that make the engine of democracy run smoothly. It would seem churlish to disagree with such pragmatic and reasonable advice. So let me sound churlish—this sort of activity has the potential to be counterproductive to democracy promotion.

Exhibit A is Russia. The political scientist Sarah Henderson has done extensive fieldwork looking at Russian civil society that received funding from USAID, the Soros foundation, or other Western sources. And what she found was disturbing. Western funding of the NGO community in Russia has led to perverse tradeoffs in the creation of a democratic civil society. When these civic organizations become more dependent upon foreign material resources, their ability to mobilize or even connect with their alleged constituents decreased. Organizations that received western funding become too wrapped up in pleasing their

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donors with monthly reports and snazzy conferences—in the process, they triggered distrust among Russians suspicious of their funding sources.

If you think about how this would/will play out in the Arab world, things don't look great. Most Arab regimes function as *rentier* states—governments that don't need to ask much of their citizenry because of oil revenues and the like. Boosting democracy aid to non-governmental elements in the region has the potential to cause *rentier* governments to persist with a difference source of funding.

I'm not saying that Biden's suggestion of funding civil society is worthless—but it's not even close to the magic bullet that many liberals believe it to be.

Marc Lynch: The invasion of Iraq changed things, no doubt about it—and, not the least, put an end to the much-hated and much-abused Iraq sanctions. But its effects on democratic reforms are all second order and indirect. In social science jargon, invading Iraq was neither necessary nor sufficient for democratic reforms in the region.

The occupation didn't introduce the idea of democratic reforms. There were plenty of Arabs demanding such reforms before the Iraq war. They didn't need an American army in Baghdad to want democratic change, a more accountable and transparent government, a freer media, and all the other things they've been demanding for years. They didn't need to see Iraqi elections to demand elections of their own—they've been doing so for years.

The occupation of Iraq also hasn't substantially changed their prospects for getting those reforms. I don't think that the "demonstration effect" of an Iraqi democracy (even if there were such a thing) is really all that significant. Local factors matter far more in each Arab country.

And don't forget, the lessons of Iraq remain pretty ambiguous. The elections were an exciting moment, but, for most of the occupation period, the Arab view of Iraq has been (fairly or unfairly) one of an unpopular occupation, intense violence, Abu Ghraib, and so on. The elections helped, but let's face it—there's still a violent insurgency going on, the elections led to months of political stalemate, and the thrill of the elections wore off a while ago. I don't think many Arabs look at Iraq as something to emulate.

Dan Drezner: Let's state as given that the January election in Iraq was strong evidence that democracy has made some inroads in Iraq. What about the rest of the region? I'm surprised that Marc is downplaying the significance of the Iraqi elections, since I would suggest that the causal mechanism through which the election mattered was having the election broadcast and commentated to death on al Jazeera and other Arab media outlets. The fact that independent Arab media covered the event so well sent a credible signal to other Arabs about the Iraqi desire for democracy.

I'll go even further and make a truly counter-intuitive suggestion: The Iraqi elections mattered more because of the violent insurgency. What stunned everyone was not just that the election was successful, but that the initial conditions for success were so poor. What the Iraqi election signaled to indigenous activists—and the governments in the region—was that it was possible for peaceful demonstrations of political voice to blunt the power of violence as a political tool.

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**

Chutzpah indeed

If you have attended Harvard Law School, or seen the movie *Reversal of Fortune*, you know that modesty is not one of Alan Dershowitz's more conspicuous traits. Those who have been denied these experiences can, however, get a feeling for the man from this line in his recent book review in *The New York Times*: "I wondered how [the author]...managed to capture the ambiance of this orthodox Jewish neighborhood in which I grew up, until I noticed that he lists my book, 'Chutzpah,' as one of his sources."

The biggest junket of all

When asked about the congressional delegation that Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) recently led to the Paris Air Show, often called "the biggest junket there is," the Senator's office "refuse[d] to disclose how many members came along, how much it cost taxpayers, and offered few details about the event," according to James G. Lakely of *The Washington Times*. The staff's excuse: "Security reasons." Stevens, it seems, is president pro tempore of the Senate. "It's very unusual for us to comment on trips that Sen. Stevens makes," the staff explained, "because they are confidential because he's in the line of succession."

Bring us home a doggy bag

As we've often pointed out, the junketeers on these trips include not only the members of Congress, but also members of their staffs. *The New Republic*'s Michael Crowley recently interviewed a female staffer who enjoyed paid trips to China, Taiwan, Hawaii, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. "We always stay at the nicest hotels and eat out at super-nice, trendy restaurants."

What did you believe and when did you believe it?

What disturbed me most about the recent revelation about the investigation of the guests on Bill Moyers's television show "Now" arranged by Kenneth Tomlinson, the chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, was that, according to *The New York Times*, it was focused on the "political leanings" of the guests. It would be legitimate to investigate whether the facts provided by the guests were true, or whether the segment in which they appeared was fair and accurate. But examining the guests' political beliefs sounds like an assignment Joe McCarthy would have given Roy Cohn.

To get an idea of the quality of intellect behind the report to Tomlinson, consider that it called Sen. Chuck Hagel, the Nebraska Republican, a "liberal" because he had some doubts about Bush's Iraq policy. It also classified a segment on Pentagon waste as "anti-defense."

Fancy meeting you here

By the way, did you notice that one of the lobbyists hired by Tomlinson is none other than Brian Darling? As an aide to Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), Darling wrote the memo telling Republicans how to make "a great political issue" out of the Terri Schiavo life-support case.

Street smarts?

If you have doubted the depth of Wall Street's corruption, consider that the recent settlement by Citigroup and JP Morgan Chase, in which they agreed to pay Enron investors $2 billion and $2.2 billion respectively, followed by only a few months the agreement by those same two banks to pay WorldCom investors $2.6 billion and $2 billion, respectively. In other words, each of these respected pillars of the financial world were up to their ears in two of the greatest financial scandals of the era.

By the way, be sure to catch *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*. George H.W. and George W. can be seen cozying up to Enron executives. As you leave the theater, you might reflect on W.'s recent nomination of Rep. Christopher Cox (R-Calif.), an apostle of deregulation, to head the SEC. If it does nothing else, this film demonstrates the folly of the deregulation zealots, showing that they let Enron manipulate the California energy crisis and revealing how they abused their freedom from oversight to make one shady deal after another.

A young college student recently told Jason DeParle of *The New York Times* that her ambition is to be a lobbyist for a pharmaceutical company.

Our new pill totally cures cancer

Have you suspected that a good many of those pharmaceutical ads you see on television exaggerate the benefit of the drug being peddled? According to *USA Today*, 36 percent of FDA complaints to drug companies about their promotional materials concern "unsubstantiated or misleading efficacy claims." Fifty-seven percent of the complaints say that the

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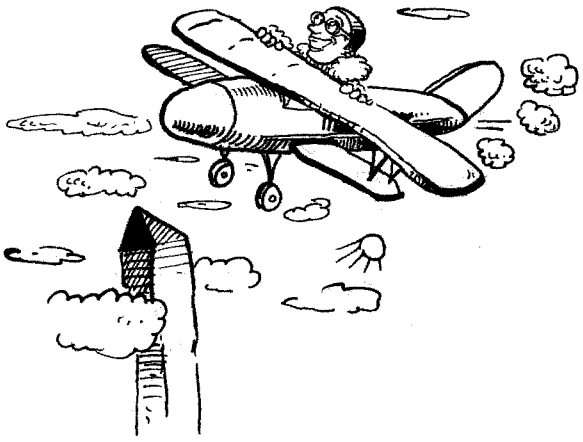

ads "minimized or omitted risk information or made it hard to read." Unfortunately, the FDA does not complain or demand changes in ads nearly often enough. The agency has only 40 people to review more than 30,000 promotions every year.

Just try not to drive in front of one

I continue to be scared to death of those giant semi-trailer trucks. And with good cause. A recent check in Texas of 5,500 of these behemoths found that more than 1,500 were unsafe, according to a report by Jim Cummins of "NBC Nightly News." Was this unusual? Not at all. The national figures for last year were 24 percent unsafe. The most common problem is bad brakes.

We ran out of money for flashlights

Speaking of safety, did you know that although up to 90 percent of airline maintenance is performed at night, FAA inspectors spend only 3 percent of their time conducting night-time inspections? This and other troubling facts turned up by the Department of Transportation's Inspector General prompted Margaret Warner of the "Jim Lehrer Show" to interview Marion Blakey, the FAA administrator, on June 9.

Warner: "So, [what] is your reaction to this report card?"

Blakey: "Well I think it's fundamentally flawed. In fact, we see it as a very old-fashioned approach to looking at safety oversight because, in fact, these days it's not about standing over someone's shoulder in the middle of the night and seeing if they're turning the wrench in the right direction. It's really about looking to see that the carrier, that the repair stations, those who are providing this kind of service, have very strong safety systems in place. And it's about analyzing the data to see what the data tell us about where there really is risk."

Lazy administrators and lazy inspectors love to hide behind this kind of bureaucratic B.S. When a couple of years ago, I asked the Deputy Director of the Department of Homeland Security about what appeared to be several obvious holes in the nation's security, I was told, don't worry, "we have a system of systems." You learn in Washington to ask, exactly what is the system? And what is the data you're going to analyze? If the system is no good, good data doesn't help. And if the data is not reliable, the greatest system won't work. And how can you know the data gives a true picture without looking over some real shoulders as real wrenches are being turned?

The case against the case against pill-splitting

I had thought pill-splitting was a dangerous practice born of financial desperation. People, I feared, were only getting half the dose they needed. Not necessarily, reports Ryan Nakashima of the AP. It depends on what pill you split. If you're supposed to take a 20-milligram dose of Lipitor and split the pill, that's not good. But if you buy a 40-milligram Lipitor pill and split it, that's fine. What is lovely about this is that the 40-milligram pill and the 20-milligram dose cost exactly the same.

You actually want us to enforce our rules?

One hole in the FAA's system appeared in May, when a 69-year old pilot caused near-chaos in Washington by penetrating the restricted air space around the nation's Capitol. The pilot took off from the small airport in Smoketown, Pa., without checking weather reports and without reading the FAA's "Notice to Airmen" which pilots are supposed to read before taking off and which would have told him about the restrictions. He then proceeded to get completely lost, penetrating three layers of restricted airspace—"we have a system of systems"—becoming confused and failing to respond to several warnings by pursuit planes before finally answering.

Why was this pilot flying? He was supposed to have his piloting skills reappraised every two years and have frequent physicals. But what the system fails to provide is a check to see that he actually does what he is supposed to do. No one knows unless he happens to be seen doing something wrong. Then, he may be reported to the FAA. It is also possible that he could have been spotted by one of the very occasional "ramp checks" that FAA conducts to check pilot credentials. There does not, however, appear to have been a ramp check in Smoketown.

Did you see the story in June about the drunk who stole a plane from the Westchester County Airport and flew it away? He could have been a terrorist—as could the pilot from Smoketown.

Lessons in corporate suicide

Although oil companies like BP and Royal Dutch Shell have begun to

Illustrations by Molly Crabapple

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acknowledge that fossil fuels are the major source of global warming and are investing in alternative fuels, the industry's giant, Exxon, refuses to go along. Its CEO, Lee Raymond, is firmly opposed to the idea that fossil fuels cause global warming, and to proposals in Congress to cap emissions. Indeed, according to Jeffrey Ball of *The Wall Street Journal*, as a younger executive in the mid-1980s Raymond shut down Exxon's renewable-energy program. Needless to say, as CEO, he has not revived it.

They didn't bother to evacuate the Monthly's office

When that test pilot strayed into the restricted space around Washington, "it was not until the scare was nearly over," reports *The Washington Post*, "that [a sergeant] got word to police commanders." On the other hand, the Capitol building and the White House had received timely warnings. It's just the general public that got left out. The *Post*'s Colbert King points out that F-16 fighters were prepared to shoot down the plane. If the plane had been loaded with explosives, the danger to those in its path could have been great. Shouldn't at least the schools have been warned, asks King, so that the children would have had the same chance to take cover that Dick Cheney and the congressmen had? They still would have been killed by a direct hit, but anything less could have spared them if they had been able to take cover.

The nicest hotels, part 2

Congressmen and their staff members are not the only government officials to live well while traveling. Consider the 19 American intelligence agents who angered the Italian government by snatching a Muslim cleric in 2003.

Although up to 90 percent of airline maintenance is performed at night, FAA inspectors spend only 3 percent of their time conducting night-time inspections.

Italian prosecutors and police have uncovered credit card and hotel records that show the agents running up bills as much as $500 per person a day at hostelries like Milan's Hotel Principe di Savoia, which calls itself "one of the world's most luxuriously appointed hotels," where the total tab came to $42,000. After they had dispatched the cleric to Germany, several of the agents felt the need for some further R&R. "Four of them," writes Craig Whitlock of *The Washington Post*, "checked into luxury hotels" in Venice.

I know one thing the "Results Commission" won't produce...

The Bush administration plans to create two new commissions, the Sunset Commission and the Results Commission, that are designed, according to Charles Hunt of *The Washington Times*, "to evaluate all federal government agencies and eliminate those that did not perform as promised." I've always believed in the need for this kind of evaluation, but I hate to see it performed by the Bush gang. The same applies to another effort of the administration that I would ordinarily applaud—its attempt to make pay raises more dependent upon performance and less on seniority.

The problem is that what the Bushies regard as effective performance by an agency or an employee is likely to be quite different from what makes sense to many of the rest of us. For example, in the Bush team's eyes, the more a regulatory agency deregulates the better. And the White House's idea of an employee who deserves promotion is John Bolton. Employees of the Department of Homeland Security seem to share my concern. In a recent survey, they were asked if they believed that the Department's personnel decisions were based on merit. Only 20 percent answered yes.

When I grow up, I wanna be...

A young college student recently told Jason DeParle of *The New York Times* that her ambition is to be a pharmaceutical company lobbyist. Ah, the idealism of youth.

They also had a bad hair month

The news about the FBI has not been heartening. On June 6 came word that for at least two years before its computerized case management system crashed, there was ample evidence that it was a turkey. On June 7, members of the 9/11 commission, who have formed a private group to continue operating as anti-terrorism watchdogs, said, according to *The Washington Post*, that "the FBI has stumbled badly in its attempts to remake itself." On June 10, the *Post* said that according to a report by the Inspector General of the Department of Justice, "the FBI missed at least five chances to detect the presence of two of the hijackers" before 9/11. On June 20, the AP reported that FBI managers admitted that "expertise about the Middle East or terrorism was not important in choosing the agents they promoted to top jobs."

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George Bald, the FBI's anti-terrorism chief, said "his first terrorism training came 'on the job' when he moved to headquarters to oversee the counter-terrorism strategy two years ago." When asked about his knowledge of the Middle East he said, "I wish that I had it. It would be nice."

Lack of expertise was also a problem with the FBI computer project, as were frequent management turnover and design changes—including 36 to the contract alone. What happens is that when new managers come in, they want to put their stamp on the project by making changes before they know what they are doing. Gradually, they realize the project is a disaster waiting to happen, and become determined to get out at least one step ahead of the sheriff: "Send me anywhere, I'll go to Butte!"

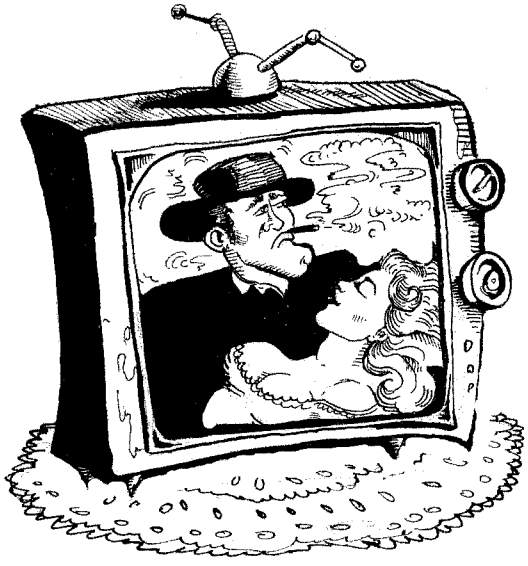
Power napkin

In a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, Jeffrey Goldberg compared the power of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to that of the AARP and the National Rifle Association. If that strikes you as incredible, consider a conversation he had with an AIPAC insider in which Goldberg asked if AIPAC's influence had diminished. "A half smile appeared on his face, and he pushed a napkin across the table. 'You see this napkin?' he said. 'In twenty-four hours, we could have the signatures of seventy senators on this napkin.'"

To get an idea of the quality of intellect behind the report on Moyers's guests, consider that it called Sen. Chuck Hagel, the Nebraska Republican, a "liberal" because he had some doubts about Bush's Iraq policy.

The hacking cough is particularly sexy

I was one of those teenagers who took up smoking because I wanted to look sophisticated like the people in the movies of the 1940s. Back then it seemed like all the stars smoked. Even today, smoking is featured in 75 percent of the films. And unfortunately the movies still influence the young. "390,000 kids will take up smoking this year because of what they see their screen idols doing," reports Rusty Marks of the *Charleston Gazette* on the basis of statistics from the American Lung Association. Christina Ricci, now a major star herself, took up smoking at age 11. According to Marks, "Ricci... vowed to quit smoking when she hit 20. Five years later... she's still puffing away."



The statistics for smokers who start that early are grim. Isn't anyone in the film industry troubled by what they are doing? "We believe that most of the strong, positive images for cigarettes and smoking are created by cinema and television," said a 1989 Phillip Morris report.

The case for sugar beets

American sugar beet farmers are in the news because they are threatened by CAFTA, which may result in reducing the restrictions on the import of foreign sugar. I must admit I have a soft spot in my heart for sugar beets. The reason is that in my seventh grade geography class, when I was asked about the crops grown in a state or country and was in doubt about the correct answers, I found that "sugar beets" was the one most likely to be accepted by the teacher. It may not have been first, second, or third, but it almost always made the list. Success with that answer meant that "beet sugar" was an absolute lock as an answer to the next question, which was what does the state or country produce?

Redford originally wanted to play Bachinski

Whenever the Watergate story resurfaces and its heroes are celebrated, a couple of names are usually left out. One is that of Frank Willis, the guard who discovered the break-in. The other is E.J. Bachinski, the *Post* police reporter who got hold of one burglar's address book, which connected the burglars to Howard Hunt and the White House. Bachinski saw the potential dynamite, gave the information to Bob Woodward and the rest is history. But without either of these men, there would never have been a Watergate scandal.

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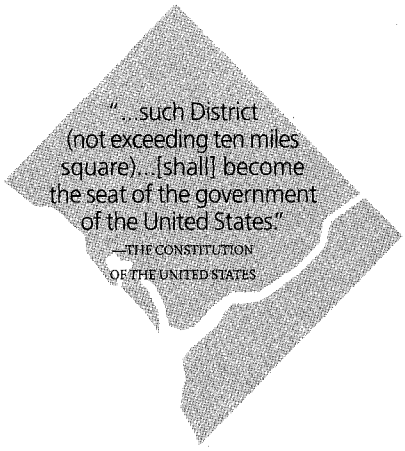
10 MILES SQUARE



House Divided

In Washington, even apartment-hunting is partisan.

By Amy Sullivan

Americans around the country are familiar with the housing crunch: Prices keep rising, occupancy rates are at near-record highs, and—particularly in major cities—competition for those rare vacancies can be fierce. In pursuit of a roof over her head, the typical house hunter may find herself setting aside visions of the perfect urban loft and considering a less-than-convenient location, no parking, an EZ-Bake-sized oven, and an inescapable dog smell. In Washington, D.C., the question becomes one degree more complicated. "Can I live without air conditioning?" is a crucial consideration, yes. But not nearly as difficult as, "Can I live with (or rent from) a Republican?"

Desperate times, however, call for desperate measures. In early June, the late hours that this job requires finally got to me, and I decided the time had come to ditch my cheap but far-off apartment for one closer to the office. Which is how, several days later, I found myself standing in the kitchen of a prospective landlord, staring at an assortment of red-white-and-blue elephant magnets on his refrigerator, and frantically considering possible answers to the question he had just

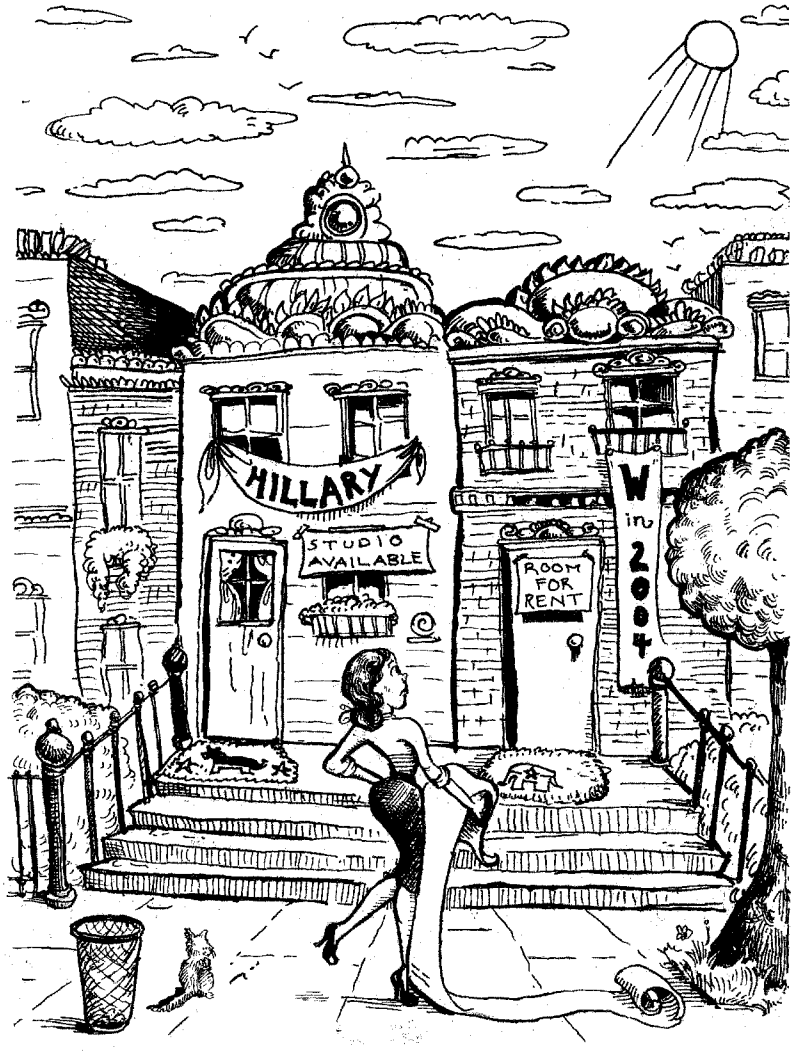


Illustration by Molly Crabapple

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The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Susan Kelleher & Duff Wilson

The Seattle Times

(June 26–30, 2005)

"Suddenly Sick: The hidden big business behind your doctor's diagnosis."

The obesity epidemic and other apparent public health crises may be manufactures of the pharmaceutical industry, two Seattle Times reporters found. The Times reports that though 75 percent of Americans have been diagnosed with hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, or obesity, "millions of them are not truly sick and may never be, even without medication." Why are they getting diagnosed? Studies funded by pharmaceutical company money have expanded definitions of diseases—and then recommended new, expensive remedies to solve the problems they created.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

asked me. "So, what kind of magazine is *The Washington Monthly*?" It sounded harmless enough. But just the fact that he asked meant that I'd already slipped up, sending my initial email inquiry from a work account instead of the more anonymous Hotmail address. Drat.

"Um, it's political," I replied, trying to focus on counting kitchen cabinets and figuring out where my slow cooker would go. (You can take the girl out of the Midwest, after all, but she's still going to need to make goulash from time to time.) Maybe he would lose interest, and I could switch conversation topics. "That's interesting," he said instead. "Liberal or conservative?"

I quickly reviewed my options. It was too late to try to pass the magazine off as the glossy and apolitical *Washingtonian*, even though most people confuse the two anyway. Should I lie? It didn't seem like the best way to start with the guy who would determine whether or not the hot water heater would get fixed in the middle of winter. For a few brief moments, I wondered if I'd made a mistake—rendered temporarily stupid, I tried to remember whether elephants were the good guys or the bad guys. *I like elephants. Yes, but that's why it's counterintuitive. You're not an elephant, you're an ass.* Yes, I was. I really needed to move, the place wasn't bad—anchors-away decorating scheme in the bathroom aside—and here I was picking an unnecessary partisan fight.

In the end, I opted for the standard weaselly response that I give most conservatives. "We're kind of, you know, in the middle...taking on both sides, that sort of thing." It sounded just as lame as it always does. Feet were shifted, throats were cleared, and we both quickly made excuses to bring the apartment showing to an end.

This all must sound faintly insane to anyone who doesn't live in the Washington area, and perhaps even to some who do. If you need a place to live, and someone is looking for a tenant, what on earth does partisan affiliation have to do with it? But that's just the point. Partisan identity has everything to do with living in Washington. It affects what bars you frequent, who you date, and whether that car with the "W" bumper sticker lets you merge into its lane.

Sometimes, on those occasions when times are really tight—say, when your only other option is to slink back home and live with your mom, dad, and the cat—partisan differences can be overcome. One year, I saved money for graduate school by sharing a house with three conservative evangelical women; we became good friends and tensions in the house were low as long as I ignored the photo on the coffee table that showed them protesting outside the Supreme Court during the 2000 recount with signs that read, "Gore, You Run Like a Girl!" And for the past few years, I have rented an apartment from two lovely friends who couldn't be farther from me on the political spectrum. We avoided each other for several months following last fall's election, and it's understood that they think my political comrades are godless heathens who would run the country into a sinful pit of despair given the chance, but aside from that, we get along swimmingly.

Still, you can never be too careful. In this city, as in few other

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places, identifying as a Democrat or Republican doesn't just indicate the way you vote at the polls. It's who you are, it's what motivates your career choices, it's why you work long hours for low pay and—if your side is out of power—often little political reward. At the end of the day, you can only plaster on a smile for so many "Oh, ho, ho...we all know Republicans/Democrats are a bunch of corrupt liars" cracks, whether they come from your neighbor or housemate or landlord.

So, when I found what appeared to be the perfect apartment late last month, I was guarded. Judging from the online photos, the place looked adorable. When I emailed (from my Hotmail account) to set up a time to see the apartment, the landlord wrote that he and his partner lived on the second floor of the house. A gay couple! Unless they were Log Cabin, that could only be a good sign. The visit went well, and Ed and I ended up chatting away in the kitchen until he asked me whether the apartment was convenient to my office. "Absolutely," I replied. "I work near the White House." Ed became quiet, and we were on our way the door with perfunctory goodbyes when he looked down at my rental application.

"Oh, you're a journalist!" he said. "For *The Washington Monthly*! When you said you worked near the White House, I thought...well, I thought something else." Smiles all around. "Oh, no," I assured him. "We're not involved with all that." Relieved, we shook hands heartily.

I'm moving in next month. And I'll be bringing my Bobby Kennedy poster with me. Because while we in the nation's capital would like to see a little more bipartisanship in the House, we don't necessarily need to start at home.

Amy Sullivan is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

JARGON WATCH:

The uproar over Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin's June remarks comparing the abuses at Guantanamo prison to the crimes of Nazi Germany reminded us once again of what should be a hard and fast rule of politics: Nazi/Hitler comparisons—while always tempting—are never a good idea.

"If I read this [a list of abuses at Guantanamo prison]...and did not tell you that it was an FBI agent describing what Americans had done to prisoners in their control, you would most certainly believe this must have been done by Nazis, Soviets in their gulags, or some mad regime—Pol Pot or others."
—Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), on abuses at Guantanamo, June 14, 2005
Apology made: 3 days later; "I have learned from my statement that historical parallels can be misused and misunderstood."

"The audacity of some members to stand up and say, 'How dare you break this [filibuster] rule!' It's the equivalent of Adolf Hitler in 1942 saying, 'I'm in Paris. How dare you invade me. How dare you bomb my city. It's mine.'"
—Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), on the filibuster debate, May 19, 2005
Apology made: 2 hours later; "It was a mistake, and I meant no offense."

"Sixty years ago in Nazi Germany, it was state policy [that] in order to perfect humanity, it would be required to destroy humanity. And the medical experiments at Auschwitz were carried out for that explicit purpose."
—State Sen. Bruce Chandler (R-Wash.), on stem cell research, March 16, 2005
Apology made: 3 days later; "The references made to the Holocaust were regarded by some, understandably, as insensitive and inappropriate."

"Hitler never abandoned the cloak of legality. He recognized the enormous psychological value of having the law on his side....That's what the nuclear option seeks to do."
—Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), on the nuclear option, March 1, 2005
Apology made: None yet, although Santorum called for one, charging that Byrd's comments were "inexcusable."

"Now forgive me, but that is right out of Nazi Germany. I don't understand...why all of a sudden we are passing laws that sound as if they are right out of Nazi Germany?"
—Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), on a Democratic tax proposal, Sept. 5, 2002
Apology made: Not only did Gramm not apologize, he also repeated the analogy a few minutes later.

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Killing Them Softly

Why the mild-mannered Dick Durbin became the GOP's top target.

By David Corn

On June 14, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), the Democratic whip, went to the Senate floor to say a few things about an issue that had long concerned him: the handling of prisoners and detainees at Guantanamo. He noted that the Bush administration had set aside longstanding treaties, and that Congress had neglected to "hold the administration accountable for its failure to follow the law of the land when it comes to the torture and mistreatment of prisoners and detainees." He said that for two years he had urged the Republicans to hold hearings on this issue. He pointed out that the Supreme Court had rejected portions of the Bush administration's detention policies. He cited an email from an FBI agent who complained that Guantanamo interrogators were using "torture techniques" and a report from another agent who had observed detainees "chained hand and foot in a fetal position to the floor, with no chair, food or water." The prisoners, he read, were often covered in their own urine and feces and had been left in these conditions for 24 hours or more.

Durbin then raised his eyes from the report and addressed the chamber: "If I read this to you and did not tell you that it was an FBI agent describing what Americans had done to prisoners in their control, you would most certainly believe this must have been done by Nazis, Soviets in their gulags, or some mad regime—Pol Pot or others—that had no concern for human beings. Sadly, this is not the case. This was the action of Americans in the treatment of their prisoners. It is not too late. I hope we will learn from history. I hope we will change course."

Conservatives went ballistic. Right-wing bloggers and media blasted Durbin and accused him of having compared American soldiers to Nazis. Talk show hosts derided him as "Turban Durbin." Columnist Michelle Malkin branded him a traitor: "There is a war on. Durbin has shown us which side he's on." In the *Weekly Standard*, radio ranter Hugh Hewitt called for the Senate to censure Durbin. Newt Gingrich demanded similar action, and Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.)—who knows about controversial statements—urged Durbin to resign his leadership position. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld equated Durbin with Jane Fonda. Other administration officials and Republican senators piled on. Less than a week after Durbin's speech, a Google search for "Durbin Guantanamo Nazis" produced 44,000 hits. As the assault continued, even Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, a Democrat whose son is currently serving in Iraq, publicly scolded Durbin, his political ally.

Durbin's comments—though not necessarily inaccurate—were ill-advised. As a rule, politicians ought to steer clear of comparisons to Hitler, Nazis, the Holocaust, and the like. Still, this rule has been broken before without reactions coming close to this level of fury. In March, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) compared the Republican threat to end the judicial filibuster to Hitler's grab for power. A few months later, Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) likened Senate Democrats who opposed the "nuclear option" to Hitler. Both comments drew complaints—but nothing like what happened to Durbin. What was it about his remarks that caused the right-wingers to aim such massive firepower at a 60-year-old, second-term senator whom most Americans had never heard of until that week?

The answer is that they went after Durbin because he's a threat. A triple threat, in fact. Today's Republicans may not be competent at planning wars or managing the federal treasury, but when it comes to the politics of attack, they know what they're doing. And they know whom to target. In the last six months, Democrats have scored political successes with an oppositional strategy that has made life difficult for Republicans on Social Security reform, judicial nomina-

David Corn is Washington editor of *The Nation*.

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Dick Durbin, Democratic whip (pictured at right)

Getty Images

tions, and the John Bolton confirmation. Durbin, a sharp tactician, has been Democratic Leader Harry Reid's chief partner in concocting that strategy and its details. Durbin is also good in front of a television camera and is often cited by Democrats as the party leader who can best argue the Democrats' case in the media. (He outshines Reid in this regard.) And Durbin, an active member of the judiciary committee and one of the toughest questioners in the Senate, is expected to assume a leading role in the battle over Bush's nominee to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court.

Until the Gitmo dustup, this behind-closed-doors tactician, effective public advocate, and dutiful committee-room battler had been virtually untouched by the right-wing attack machine. But this assault against Durbin was serious—"he's fighting for his political life," one Durbin aide said in the middle of the episode—and a reminder of the dangers of being a high-profile opponent of Republicans these days. CNN reported that Republicans were crowing that the Durbin offensive was part of a larger project to go after Democratic leaders, including party chief Howard Dean and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). The controversy—in which Durbin eventually backed down—also raised the question: What are Democrats willing to risk to be a fierce opposition party?

Floor-fighting man

Prior to the Guantanamo hullabaloo, Durbin was routinely hailed by Democrats as one of their party's strongest assets in the Capitol, and it has not been hard to find Demo-

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Inside the office of Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid

cratic professionals who go ga-ga over Durbin. Todd Webster, who was communications director for Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), gushed to me, "He's the smartest, the quickest on his feet, the most persuasive floor debater. He's great on television. He argues the Democratic position better than anyone. He's not preachy or screechy; he's tough and folksy. He does get it. He is the great white hope for Democrats." It was a sign of Durbin's popularity among Senate Democrats that he was not challenged for the position of Democratic whip when Reid moved from that post to the leader's position in January.

As whip, Durbin's main job is to watch the Senate floor and monitor legislation and pending votes. His responsibilities also include generating support for party positions (the term "whip" comes from "whipper-in"—that's the person in a fox hunt charged with keeping the dogs from straying) and holding together his caucus. It's a tough job to corral a group of people with large egos, ambitions, and their own agendas—several of whom hum "Hail to the Chief" to themselves daily. Perhaps most importantly, Durbin and Reid aim to develop strategy to thwart the Republicans while presenting Democrats as more than just a "just-say-no" party.

This spring, for example, when Republicans threatened to eliminate the filibuster for judicial nominations, Durbin devised the Democrats' contingency plan in case Senate Republican Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) pushed the nuclear button. In such an event, under the Durbin plan, the Democrats would take advantage of the Senate rules—which virtually allow any senator to bring up legislation at any time—and continually introduce popular initiatives: expanding tax credits for health care, raising the minimum wage, and releasing oil from the strategic petroleum reserve to counter the rising price of gasoline. The strategy held three benefits. First, it would clutter up the Senate calendar, limiting the time Republicans had for their own priorities. Second, because Democrats would be proposing real legislation, Republicans would have a harder time casting them as mere obstructionists. Finally, it would put Republicans on record as voting against measures many Americans support. One of the first bills Durbin lined up for recurring votes was legislation intended to reduce abortion rates by requiring private drug plans to cover prescription contraceptives. Such legislation would place Republicans in the awkward position of opposing a measure designed to lower the number of unwanted pregnancies. The counter-nuclear plan devised by Durbin may well have motivated several Republicans to reject Frist's nuclear option and seek a compromise. (After 14 so-called moderate Democratic and Republican senators brokered a deal that apparently—or perhaps temporarily—defused the standoff, Durbin said the arrangement was "not what I would choose" but "the alternative could have been much worse.")

In his committee work, Durbin, a lawyer, has been one of the better cross-examiners in the Senate. In 2001, during John Ashcroft's confirmation hearings, Durbin forcefully questioned the attorney general nominee about the harsh campaign Ashcroft had waged as a senator against Ronnie White, an African-American Missouri supreme court judge nomi-

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nated to the federal bench. At one point, Durbin even managed to catch Ashcroft in an apparent fib about his anti-White crusade. Though the Republican was ultimately confirmed, Durbin says that dramatic confrontation remains one of his favorite moments in the Senate.

In a lesser-known showdown that year, Durbin grilled John Graham, an anti-regulation, industry-funded champion of cost-benefit analysis, who had been picked by Bush to head the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. (OIRA, a little-known government office, oversees public health, workplace safety, and environmental standards.) Durbin questioned Graham about his claim that "the evidence on pesticide residue on food as a health problem is virtually nonexistent." The National Academy of Sciences, Durbin observed, had recognized a need to protect children from pesticides. Graham defended his position. Then Durbin asked Graham what he knew of methyl parathion. "Not much," Graham said. "Methyl parathion," Durbin explained, was one of "the most toxic pesticides and the EPA had restricted its use in 1999 after studies found that methyl parathion residues on fruits and vegetables posed risks to children." Graham had no good response. "I haven't studied that particular example," he said. Durbin had out-wonked the wonk. It was ultimately a futile effort; the Republican-controlled committee voted 9 to 3 in favor of Graham's nomination. But that's what has distinguished Durbin. With little chance of winning the fight—in part due to his fellow Democrats' reluctance to wage this particular battle—Durbin would not let even an appointee for an obscure position pass by unchallenged.

In a party that often is split between those who accommodate Republicans and those who are more committed to opposition, Durbin is firmly in the opposition camp. He has been a solid member of the liberal voting bloc. When 23 Democratic senators voted against handing Bush the preauthorization to invade Iraq, Durbin was among them. He was one of 13 who said nay to Condoleezza Rice's appointment as secretary of state. He led the unsuccessful fights against the pro-industry bankruptcy bill and the legislation to move many major class-action lawsuits against corporations from state courts to federal courts. And in 2003, he tried to withhold money from the intelligence budget until Bush submitted a report to Congress detailing his use of intelligence to justify the invasion of Iraq (Republicans voted this measure down). "He's one of the few senators willing to oppose judicial nominees who will end up being confirmed because he cares about the principle," said Nan Aron, head of the Alliance for Justice, a liberal outfit that was in the thick of the filibuster fight.

Just like Johnny Carson

Given his liberal voting record and confrontational style, one might expect Durbin to rank with Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Nancy Pelosi on the list of conservative bogeymen and bogeywomen. But—until the Guantanamo controversy—he was not a high-value target of the right and didn't suffer from a reputation as a capital-L liberal. How did Durbin manage to survive for so long unscathed? Well, for one thing, his seat is relatively safe—he defeated his opponents by more than 15 points in each of his Senate races. So the Republicans have not been able to demonize him during competitive campaigns. But the best explanation is: It's that Midwestern thing.

As one consultant who has worked with Durbin remarked, "His voting record is no different than Barbara Boxer or Ted Kennedy. He's as partisan as anyone. But he doesn't turn people off." Noting that the far-from-flashy Durbin hails from a downstate district where he often had to speak to non-liberals, John Podesta, Bill Clinton's former chief of staff, said, "Durbin's great skill is being plain-spoken. He's one of the few senators who doesn't talk in Senate-ese." With a wide and plain face and a broad and stocky build, Durbin can play the part of the Midwesterner he is. "He looks like a guy who owns a neighborhood shoe store," a Durbin aide commented. How does Durbin see it? "A Midwestern perspective on issues appeals to a lot of people," he told me. "People do tell me, I like the way you analyze an issue and explain it. If I have any talent or gift, that's it. I think there's a reason why Johnny Carson was on the 'Tonight Show' for so long. Midwest is an acceptable idiom." This skill has not gone unnoticed by his opponents: Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) has called Durbin "one of the best populist speakers in America."

Durbin—in style and temperament, both crucial in politics—is no East Coast or West Coast liberal. He is an East St. Louis native whose Irish-American father and born-in-Lithuania mother were railroad employees and union members. Earlier this year, in a speech that carried on the prairie populist tradition of his late colleague Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), Durbin decried the bankruptcy bill, which made it harder for middle-income families in dire financial straits to seek relief via bankruptcy laws:

> If I went home tonight to Illinois and told someone Congress is working on a bankruptcy reform bill, they would say: "Thank goodness; it is long overdue. It is time we went after those Enron cheaters. . ." In the last few years, America has seen this parade of corporate bankruptcy—Enron, WorldCom, Adelphia, United Airlines, USAir, TWA, LTV Steel, Kmart, Polaroid, Global Crossing, KB Toys—the list goes on and on. Many of the companies that have gone into bankruptcy are associated with scandal. In some cases, the CEOs, many of whom are on trial, and their top officers were paid multimillion-dollar bonuses even as the companies were being run into the ground. Then the companies filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and asked a judge to throw out worker contracts and cancel pension plans and health benefits, leaving thousands of families devastated. Wouldn't one think in a bankruptcy bill we would go after some of these corporate bankrupt cheaters?...There is not a word here about the corporate crooks who are milking these corporations at the expense of employees and retirees. Want to talk about moral values?

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As a senator, Durbin has been known as a cause-oriented politician. But that was not always his reputation. Durbin entered politics upon graduating from Georgetown law school in 1969 when he joined the staff of Illinois Lt. Gov. Paul Simon. He moved on to serve as legal counsel to Democrats in the state senate and parliamentarian for the Illinois Senate, where he developed the deep understanding of the intricacies of legislative process that make him so valuable to Senate Democrats today. In 1982, Durbin challenged Republican Congressman Paul Findley, an 11-term incumbent who held the House seat once belonging to Abraham Lincoln. Findley had declared himself Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat's best friend in Congress—a boast that helped Durbin raise a ton of money from pro-Israel contributors. Durbin won the seat by 1410 votes, or 0.7 percent.

In the House, Durbin's voting record was liberal. A Catholic, he started out a foe of abortion and turned into a reliable supporter of abortion rights. As a member of the powerful appropriations committee, he was pegged within the world of Illinois politics as the go-to guy for help squeezing money out of Washington. His mentor, Paul Simon, at this point a U.S. senator, was the exemplar of the issues-driven, above-the-political-fray legislator; Durbin was a more conventional pol, working the system and sending bacon not just to his district but to the entire state. "If you needed an appropriation, Simon would write a letter and forget about it," a former Simon aide recalled. "Dick Durbin would walk across the hall, cut a deal with the chairman, and get the money."

In late 1994, Simon announced his retirement. Durbin ran for the Senate seat as a son of the working class who had mounted crusades against Big Tobacco and the gun lobby. He beat a Republican social conservative 56 to 41 percent. In the Senate, he continued his campaign against tobacco and gun interests. He pushed consumer issues, proposing a food protection law and opposing patent extensions for pharmaceutical firms. And he became a trusted advisor to Daschle. Without creating much noise, Durbin evolved into one of the more consistent and combative progressives in the Senate, a valuable role in the shrinking Democratic caucus.

Staying in the fray

Through Durbin's rise, his Republican foes were not able to find a good line of attack against him. During the Nigergate affair in 2003—when Durbin joined those criticizing Bush for having wrongly claimed that Iraq had been shopping in Africa for uranium to be used in a nuclear weapons program—Republicans and the White House accused Durbin of disclosing classified information and tried to have him booted from the intelligence committee. That effort petered out. Marshall Wittmann, who was a top aide to Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) until he defected to the Democratic Leadership Council last year, recalled that Senate Republicans "wanted to penetrate Durbin's mild veneer and were frustrated they couldn't get past his mild-mannered armor."

Perhaps Durbin's absence from the Democratic Party's presidential sweepstakes also afforded him protection from the right-wing attack machinery. Despite his talents as a politician, strategist, and policy hound, he has—almost oddly—shown no interest in the commander-in-chief position. "No presidential talk comes from him," says a consultant who has worked with Durbin for years. "Absolutely zero." This spring, Durbin said he had "no plan" to consider a presidential run: "You have to reach a point when it really grabs you." By all appearances he has been steadfastly ungrabbed. Perhaps the Guantanamo episode will reinforce Durbin's preexisting reluctance to consider higher office. But, more importantly, what remained unclear in the immediate aftermath of the GOP's anti-Durbin blitzkrieg was whether the assault would cause Durbin long-term damage and hinder one of the Democrats' most effective advocates and strategists.

The second day into the controversy over Durbin's comments, several GOP senators—John Warner, Mitch McConnell, and Jeff Sessions—took to the Senate floor to chastise Durbin. As soon as Durbin heard about this, he hurried to the chamber. There he vigorously defended himself and once again read the observations of the FBI agent who had witnessed the terrible conditions at Guantanamo. The next day, as the onslaught continued, Durbin was still defiant. "My statement in the Senate was critical of the policies of this administration which add to the risk our soldiers face," he declared, warning that he would not be silenced: "I will continue to speak out when I disagree with this administration." But Durbin ultimately apologized the following Tuesday. (Three days after he apologized, Agence France-Presse, quoting a United Nations source, reported that U.S. officials had acknowledged in a report submitted to the United Nations that torture had occurred at Guantanamo.)

Though some conservatives still howled for Durbin's scalp following his apology, leading Republicans retracted their claws. They had drawn blood. (Democrats subsequently mounted something of a counter-offensive by pouncing on Karl Rove after he claimed that, following 9/11, liberals wanted to "offer therapy and understanding" to the terrorists). It seemed that Democrats' great hope in the Senate had made it through the controversy. And he would not face reelection until 2008 in a state that's generally good for Democrats.

Yet what of the here and now? Durbin surely will be careful with his rhetoric. There's nothing wrong with that. But will he and his colleagues be more cautious? Waging an in-your-face opposition comes with risks. As GOPers have long understood, fierce political confrontation can lead to miscues and mistakes. (Anyone remember Newt Gingrich?) A party that wants to triumph has to accept those risks and not be cowed by the attacks, fair or unfair, that follow. These high-octane, media-driven, partisan spats and disputes may often appear to be trivial or distractions, but they are part of policy and electoral warfare that is real and epochal. The Democrats are not going to win that battle unless they—and Durbin—move past the Gitmo imbroglio and remain fully engaged in the ugly fray. ◆

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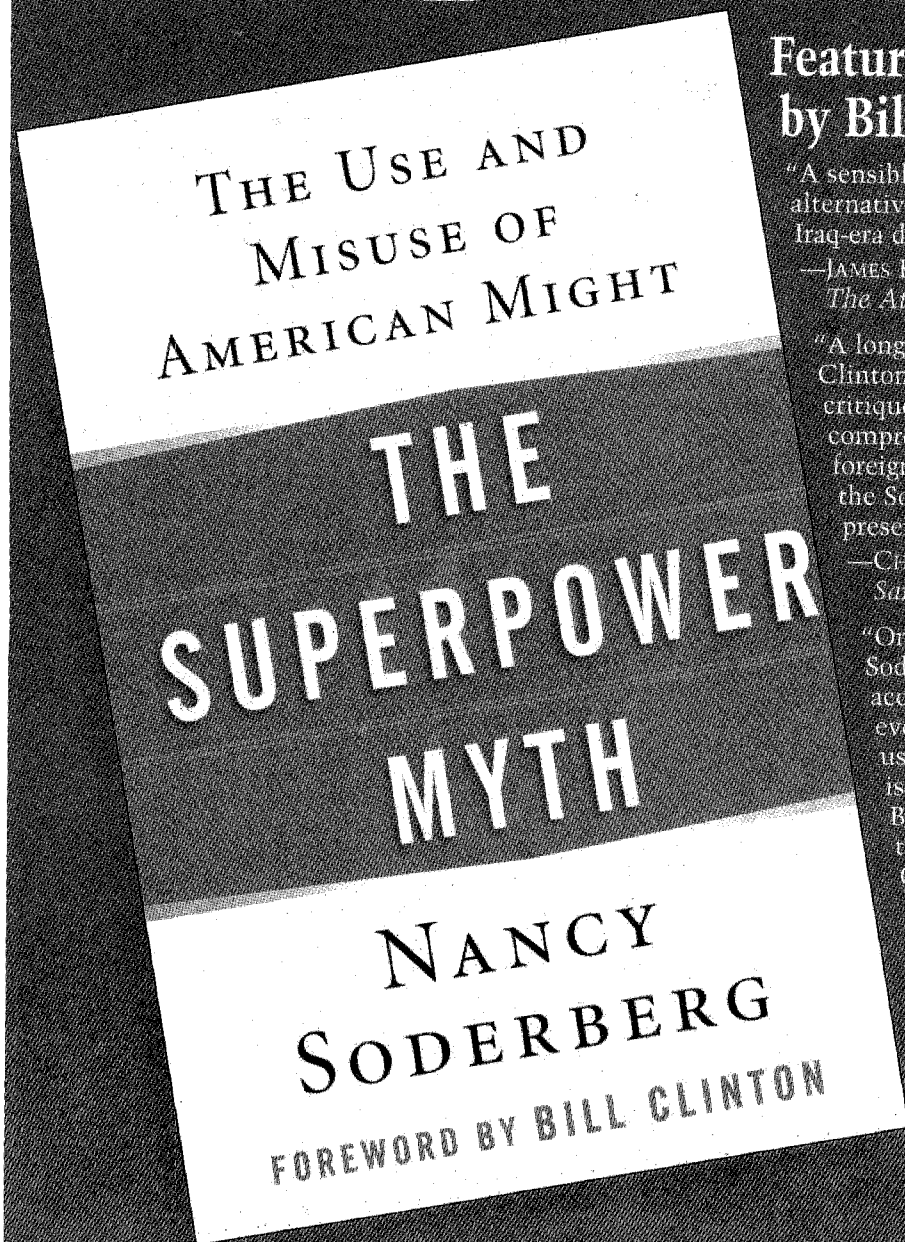
Are there limits to American power?



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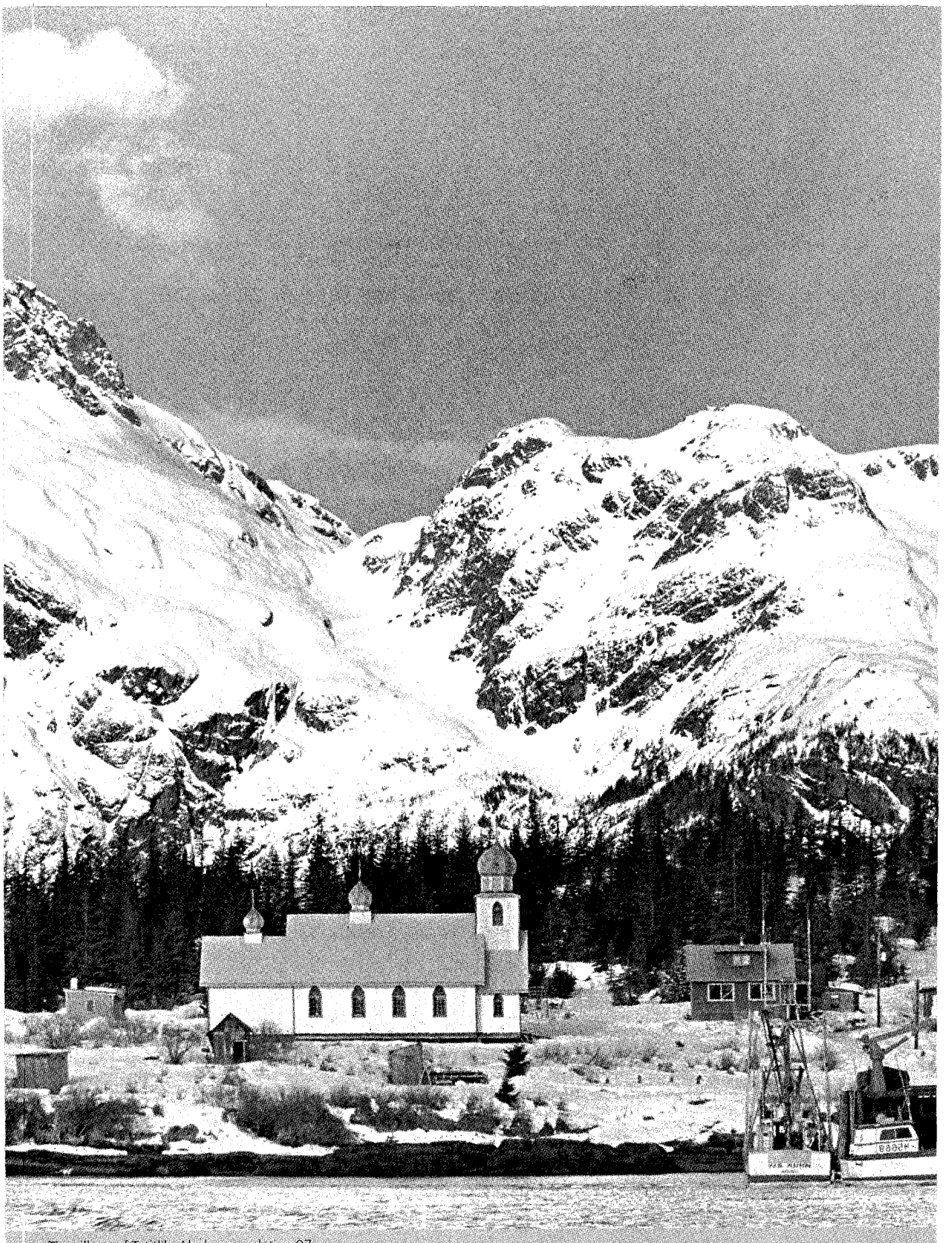

The village of Tatitlik, Alaska, population 97.

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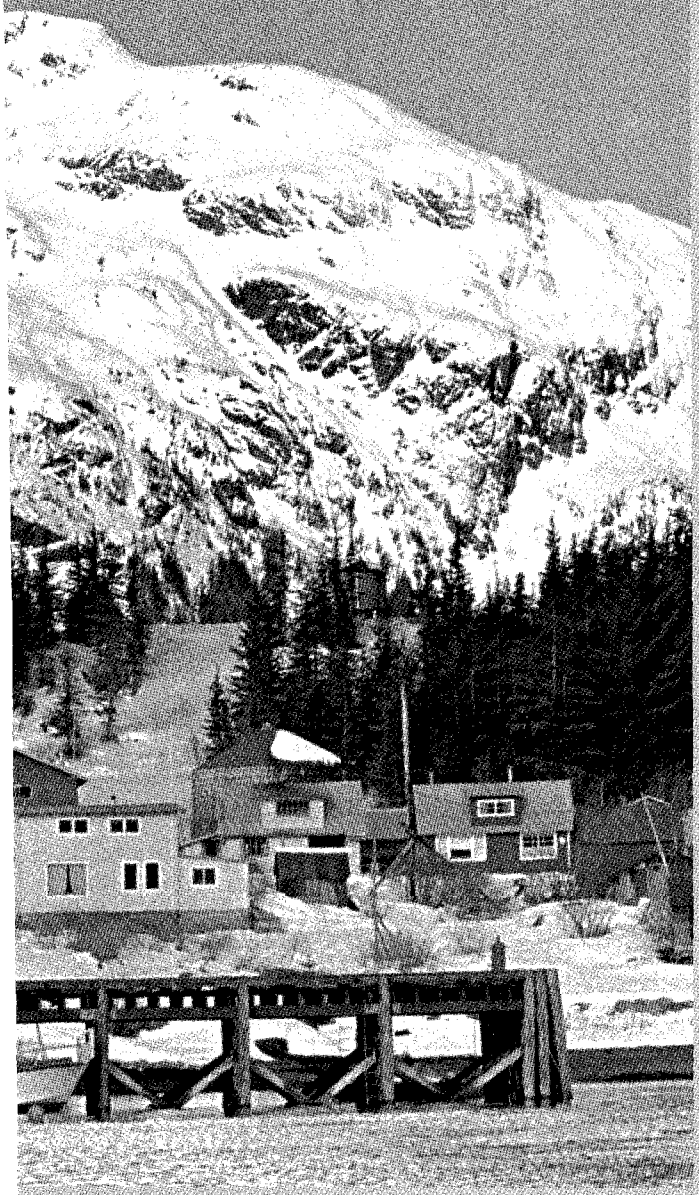
Polar Fleeced

Sen. Ted Stevens built a welfare state for Eskimos that made defense contractors rich.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells



Many remote places claim to be the end of the earth, but the tiny Eskimo village of Tatitlik, set in near-mythic isolation on a small beach on Alaska's Prince William Sound, has a better case than most. The village has stood for a thousand years on a small strip of sediment that has collected at the point where the Chugach Mountains soar out of the sound. There are three dirt roads in Tatitlik, which loop around the beach and connect back to one another; you can only get in or out by boat or by plane, and all supplies have to be flown or ferried in. Tatitlik has a population of 97, subsistence hunters and fishermen who live in about 30 small, irregular ranches set on wood platforms. The mountains that surround Tatitlik are, even in summer, mostly covered in snow, and as you pull into the village, they look like shards of broken eggshell, the village encased inside.

The people of Tatitlik have had a spectacularly unlucky history. In 1964, much of the population was relocated from the nearby village of Chenaga, which had been destroyed by the Great Alaska Earthquake. (Chenaga sat on what turned out to be the epicenter of the 9.2 Richter quake, the most powerful recorded tremor in North American history.) Then, in 1989, the drunk captain of the Exxon Valdez plowed his tanker into Blythe Reef, just five miles down the coast from Tatitlik. The Valdez spilled 10.8 million gallons of oil onto the seal beaches and herring runs that the villagers relied on for food. Tatitlik tried to get Alaska to use some of the compensation funds to build a small boat harbor for its fragile fishing fleet, but the state instead built massive industrial docks to accommodate clean-up tankers in the event of another spill. Those docks loom over the village's fishing boats, which look in comparison as if they've been imported from Lilliput.

Tatitlik has no stores and no on-village work, save for a handful of government jobs running its health clinic and school. The pride of the village is an old Russian Orthodox church, one legacy of the long history of Russian coloniza-

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.
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tion here. Used oil drums are stacked at the east end of the town, a wrecked car at the western end, and kids, on their way to hunt, sometimes lug shotguns through the streets. Until recently, the town had five cars, but the brakes on one, a black pickup, failed a couple of weeks ago, and the villager driving it had to smash the truck against the crane at the end of the tanker dock in order to keep it from rolling into the sound. So now, Tatitlik's automotive fleet is down to four.

These same villagers are the unlikely owners of a giant multinational company: the Chugach Alaska Corporation. Chugach Corp.'s annual revenues now top $700 million, nearly all of which comes from federal contracting. The company does more business with the U.S. government than do IBM, AT&T, or Motorola. Chugach and its partners run military bases from Nevada to Iraq. They monitor seismic activity from a base in Korea in support of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. And on another end of the earth, Chugach operates the Reagan Test Site, a coral reef leased from the Marshall Islands, where engineers give ballistic missiles a workout and may some day run the planned Star Wars program. The contract for that one is worth $2.5 billion.

How do the villagers, most of whom would much rather hunt seals and stalk caribou herds than go anywhere near a corporate boardroom, manage these projects? The truth is, they don't. Village chief Gary Kompkoff is vice chairman of the corporation, but no other villagers and only a handful of Eskimos are even employed on these projects. The projects are managed instead by Chugach's subsidiary companies—run by white contracting executives from offices in downtown Anchorage or in the Lower 48 states—or by Chugach's corporate partners—huge firms such as Lockheed Martin and Bechtel.

These natives are being used essentially as fronts, what the Heritage Foundation's Ronald Utt calls "corporate shells," because of certain privileges that only Alaskan tribal corporations enjoy. Chief among them is the unlimited right, given to Alaskan native-owned corporations by Congress at the behest of Alaska's senior senator, Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), to bid for "sole-source" federal contracts (those not put up for competitive bid). As a result, these companies and their giant corporate partners can win federal contracts without necessarily having to offer the government the lowest possible price.

These contracting advantages provide the natives with some modest benefits, mostly in the form of annual dividend checks. The villagers of Tatitlik who were born before 1971 get about $1,500 a year—enough to buy new outboard motors for their boats so they can chase the migrating seal herds. Chugach is one of the most successful native corporations; most villagers in Alaska, while connected to a native corporation, receive even smaller annual checks.

Many of the system's benefits, though, flow to non-native people and corporations inside the Beltway. Lobbyists get hefty fees for putting together the deals. Federal contracting officers get to pad their minority and small business requirements and sidestep the headaches of competitive bidding. Bush administration officials get a tool to circumvent civil service unions. And, most of all, the Bechtels and Lockheed Martins get business they might not otherwise have obtained, with larger profit margins than they normally enjoy.

The amount of business flowing through Eskimo contracting schemes has exploded in the post- 9/11 contracting boom. An industry that was still tiny five years ago now generates billions of dollars each year. And it's beginning to attract scrutiny. Keith Ashdown of the nonpartisan watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense calls the Eskimo loophole a "magnet for mischief." The Government Accountability Office has launched a probe into whether federal agencies are paying far more for contracts than they should. The Senate Energy and House Armed Services Committees have also held hearings on whether some sole-source contracts run through the Eskimo loophole ought to have been competitively bid. Stevens, the author of the loophole, has been accused of making hundreds of thousands of dollars from a real estate deal involving one of the Alaskan corporations he helped to create.

> If these rumblings and hearings emerge into a full-fledged scandal, it will be the third in just a few months to involve senior Republicans in Washington and aboriginal populations.

If these investigations develop into a full-fledged scandal, it will be the third in just a few months involving senior Republicans in Washington and aboriginal populations—and three's a pattern. A Senate committee is looking into the case of Jack Abramoff, the conservative lobbyist and former aide to House Majority Leader Tom DeLay who is accused of bilking millions of dollars from native Americans to help them fend off non-existent threats to their special rights to operate casinos. Meanwhile, DeLay himself is the subject of inquiries as a result of donor-funded trips to the Marianas Islands, an American protectorate where textile manufacturers operate sweatshops with imported Chinese labor outside the reach of federal wage and workplace rules, yet have the right—thanks to DeLay's influence—to stamp "Made in America" on their products.

That all three scandals involve the exploitation of federal regulatory loopholes constructed to benefit native Americans is no coincidence. It is instead an illustration of how government now works under GOP control. Once upon a time, when Democrats ran Washington, federal tax dollars for the

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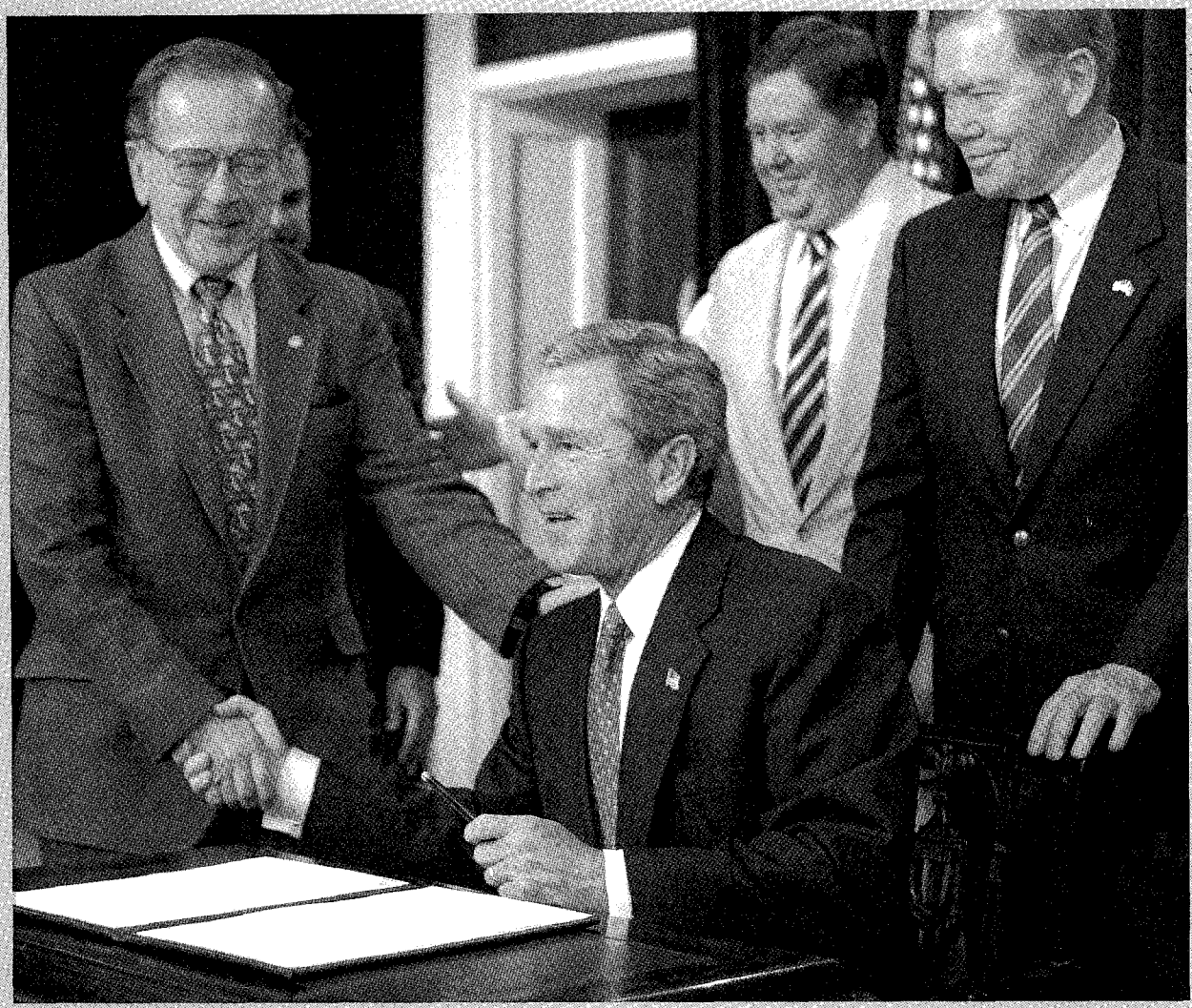

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Alaska's Sen. Ted Stevens (left), whom the state's natives call "Uncle Ted," has spent three decades using his insider power to help the native corporations.

poor and other constituencies flowed largely through federal agencies and projects. The system was often inefficient, didn't always do much for its intended beneficiaries, and over the years became unpopular with voters. Now, a new system is arising, one more in tune with the zeitgeist. The new system funnels tax dollars not through wasteful federal bureaucracies but through crony capitalist enterprises. It is as inefficient and ineffective as the old system, maybe more so. But while the old system bolstered Democratic control of Washington, this one supports Republican rule. Welcome, then, to the new conservative welfare state.

Reservation Inc.

This convoluted, controversial system is the product of one of the most bizarre and ambitious social engineering projects in recent American history, a plan designed to lift Alaskan natives out of poverty through the private sector. It's hard to imagine a group more deserving of government help; since they first began to have significant dealings with white Americans at the turn of the 20th century, Alaskan natives have had a brutal time of it. In the 1905 Yukon gold rush, they were chased off their lands by prospecting Russians and Californians. During the 1940s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began forcing tribes to abandon their itinerant hunting and settle in permanent locations; alcoholism became rampant, and children were sent off to BIA-run boarding schools, horrid dens of physical and sexual abuse. In 1957, the government physicist Edward Teller, one inspiration for *Dr. Strangelove*, and the U.S. Bureau of Atomic Research even developed a strange plan to detonate a hydrogen bomb under the native village of Point Hope.

By the time modern Alaska emerged in the mid-1960s, native Alaskans seemed natural recipients for sympathy and affirmative federal action. When oil was discovered in Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's mostly frozen and uninhabited north coast, oil companies needed to figure out how to acquire native lands to build a pipeline through the interior of the state to the ice-free port of Valdez. A small group of government and community leaders stepped in to oversee the task. These men—including Johnson administration officials, a handful of Senate aides, and some native leaders—wanted to avoid the standard reservation solution, which they believed create only dependency and stasis. The result was a break from history: They privatized the reservation. "We believed then, and I still believe now," says Bill Van Ness,

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one of the Senate aides involved in the effort, "that we were creating a revolution."

They cut a simple deal. The natives would give up most of the land they had hoped to win, reducing their claims from more than 300 million acres to 44 million. In return, the government would create special "native corporations" (more than 200 in all), owned fully by natives—a $1.5 billion cash settlement from the federal government was divided between them as seed money.

One of those pushing hardest for the bill was Ted Stevens, then a young, conservative junior senator from Alaska. The deal, ideologically appealing for him, would ultimately prove politically useful as well. While in the lower 48 states, native reservations almost invariably voted for Democrats, the involvement of Stevens's staff in creating these corporations helped to secure the loyalty of Alaska natives. Locally, Eskimos often vote Democratic, but for 30 years, they have steadfastly supported Stevens and the state's Republican delegation in Congress—largely, says Sarah Lukin of the Native American Contracting Association, "because they've been such a great help to the natives and the ANCs [Alaskan native Corporations]."

From the beginning, Stevens demonstrated not just a political but also a personal stake in native advancement. Native leaders around the state still remember fondly the senator's first wife, Ann, who during Stevens's early campaigns spent many weeks in tiny villages and developed a real rapport with the natives there. "We'd tell him, if you want our votes, don't come, just send Annie," a longtime Native leader told me. (Ann Stevens died in a plane crash in 1978.) Stevens eventually inserted an exemption in the land claims settlement act that allowed native corporations to ignore sole source contracting limits. At the time, few noticed the provision largely because natives weren't exactly in a position to run government contracts. "We spent our first years learning to spell 'corporation,'" remembers Willie Hensley, an influential early native political leader who now works in Washington as a lobbyist for the Alyeska Pipeline Corp. Life for the natives at the time was so rudimentary that Hensley has called it the "twilight of the stone age."

Although well-intentioned, the plan to turn nomadic caribou hunters and fishermen with no formal education into effective corporate managers was inherently problematic. The natives mostly created enterprises that were inefficient and returned little in the way of profits—zinc mines, timber logging, fish processing, etc. "Basically," says Hensley, "they were jobs programs." By the mid-1980s, most of the corporations were floundering, and they returned to Stevens for help. The senator worked to obtain additional benefits for them—most notably, loopholes in tax law—but by 1992, the corporations were still having a hard time getting their feet on the ground.

That's when Chugach, down to 12 employees and in bankruptcy, hired Mike Brown. Brown was a native of

One of the odder spectacles of the first years of the Bush administration was that of Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) attempting to convince the Republican caucus and the Bush administration to fund research into climate change. Stevens was an unlikely ally for the environmentalists. The Alaska senator is a steadfast friend of large American oil companies, which have been perhaps the most powerful force in denying a link between fossil fuels and a warming planet. For years, Stevens shared his patrons' position. But all politics is local. And global warming was causing Stevens's friends in the Inupiat tribe to have a whale problem.

The Inupiat illustrate the ironies of Alaskan native corporations. While owning a $1.3 billion contracting corporation, the Inupiat continue their millennia-old traditional practices of hunting Bowhead whales. Because natives are limited by international whaling conventions to traditional skin-covered, paddle-driven boats, they have little hope of catching up to the powerful Bowheads in the open sea. Instead, they camp beside holes in the ice pack, waiting with harpoons for a whale to surface. In recent years, though, as the great Alaska journalist Charles Wohlforth details in his book *The Whale and the Supercomputer*, rising temperatures have caused the ice pack to steadily recede farther and farther from the Bowhead's migratory routes. Global warming, in other words, is costing the Inupiat their hunting blinds. But because of the wealth and connections made possible by their corporation's extraordinary success (one whaling captain, Oliver Leavitt, was co-chair of Stevens's 2002 reelection campaign), the Inupiat also have real political clout.

During one particularly disastrous season, 2002, no boat on the North Slope caught any whale at all. Some villages in other parts of Alaska, sought substitutes: The whalers on an Aleutian village on Little Diomede in the Bering Sea began to chase the far more violent gray whales, to disastrous consequences: One whale smashed a boat with its tail, destroying the craft and killing the boat's captain. Fearing a future in which they were pitted against the gray whale, the Inupiat enlisted Stevens in their efforts to reverse global warming. Stevens, characteristically, rallied to the Inupiat's cause. In 2003 , the senator inserted appropriations totaling more than $10 million to fund the Barrow global climate research center. And in January, he proposed a standing Senate subcommittee to deal with climate change. and the Inupiat's fear of the gray whale managed to accomplish something that decades of research and environmental advocacy failed to do: It convinced a friend of Big Oil to admit the threat of climate change. — *B.W.-W.*

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Seward and had been a career Air Force officer, retiring as commander of an Alaskan base. He had dealt with contracts in the service, and knew both that minority firms had some advantages in dealing with the federal government and that Alaskan natives didn't seem to be earning much benefit from them. Some months earlier, he had sent a lawyer to Anchorage to investigate, and the attorney discovered that although the BIA listed Alaskan natives as an "economically and socially disadvantaged group," the Small Business Administration (SBA) did not. Brown convinced the SBA to list Alaskan natives as eligible for minority small business loans, and realized, with gathering excitement, that they had unique access to sole-source contracts. When he interviewed for the job of running Chugach, Brown told the board, "If you hire me, it'll be to commit completely to government contracting." They agreed.

Going native

Brown told me this story in mid-June in the Anchorage Sheraton's lobby restaurant as tour organizers herded senior citizens into teams for cruises around Prince William Sound. Brown is a little over 60 now, tall with a white mustache and still prone to military expressions like "hit the head." The state's prosperity traces the arc of his lifetime. When he was born in 1940, Anchorage had a population of 3,500; today, it is home to 300,000. Brown is sometimes referred to in the press as the "godfather" of native contracting, and his face breaks into a wide and sudden grin when I mention it. He has visible reasons to be proud: There are only a handful of affluent-looking buildings in Anchorage, the kind of modern glass office structures that signal wealth, but all of them seem to house either oil companies or native corporations. "The ANCs," says University of Alaska economist Steven Colt, "have become the state's establishment."

There's no natural reason why an out-of-the way place like Anchorage—a place so far from the American mainland that Russia appears on the local TV station's weather maps, but not Seattle—should have become a center of the government contracting industry. Native corporations, however, were holding some valuable cards. The combination of their sole-source contracting exemption and status as minority-owned firms gave them an advantage over competitors, a benefit that Brown leveraged. He began modestly with base management subcontracts, hiring smart project managers he knew from the contracting world to run them. "Running base services isn't rocket science," Brown told me.

But there were problems. Brown found that he couldn't find enough Eskimos with management experience to run even these simple projects. By law, minority-owned corporations and their subsidiaries are required to actually have a minority as CEO. Brown had an ace up his sleeve: Like CEOs of many of the native organizations, he had a tight relationship with Stevens and was able to get the senator on the phone. Stevens soon got his colleagues to pass legislation exempting native companies from the minority CEO rule. Then Chugach grew too big to qualify for programs favoring small businesses; Stevens lobbied for and passed an amendment letting native corporations retain their small business status regardless of how large they become. And when Chugach began to approach the nine-year limit for a single company's participation in the small business program, Stevens won yet another statutory break allowing Alaskan native firms to create endless new subsidiaries so that the parent firm could have indefinite access to contracts.

Chugach and other Alaska native programs that followed its lead were growing fast. But as they set their aim for bigger contracts in the late 1990s, they realized that they needed help navigating the complex world of Washington contracting. Again Stevens came through. As chairman and longtime member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, he had dozens of former staffers and associates working on K Street lobbying on behalf of defense contractors. They knew which firms might be interested in partnering with the native corporations, and what doors at which agencies to knock on. Pretty soon, most of the Eskimo corporations had these former staffers on retainer. If the lobbyists hit an obstacle, they could get Stevens himself to call government officials to push them to send contracts to the native corporations. "Lobbying," says current Chugach Chair Sheri Buretta, became "the backbone of the system."

In the end, though, it wasn't a very hard sell. The big contractors didn't need much convincing that sole-source deals offered significant upsides. Contracting agents within the federal bureaucracy also saw advantages—mostly, efficiency. Competitive bidding is a complex and time-consuming process. Even though it often leads to lower prices, it's not something contracting agents enjoy, especially when facing tough deadlines.

The bureaucrats had another incentive as well: the constant pressure they face to meet quotas for contracts to minority-owned and small businesses. Finding enough such companies with the capacity to do the work, especially on big projects, can be a nightmare. Eskimo-owned firms—which by then were not that small—provided an ideal solution. "We needed to get our small business numbers up, but we can't send a small business to run Los Alamos," Brad Bugger, a spokesman for the Department of Energy, told me. "But because the Alaskan native firms are exempted from the size limitations, we could send them a project that would make a significant difference in our small business numbers." So when the department needed a new contractor to run the Idaho National Laboratory, that state's biggest employer, it gave the job, on a sole-source basis, to an Alaskan native firm, Alutiiq.

Yet another party stood to benefit from native contracting. By 2001, Bush administration officials saw in the sole-source exemption a way to privatize government quickly. That year, a joint venture of two native corporations—Chenega and Arctic Slope—won a no-bid, $2.2 billion deal to operate the Defense Mapping Agency, which uses sophisticated computer modeling to map potential battlefields. The companies didn't have any of the technical experience these contracts demanded, but they did have something else.

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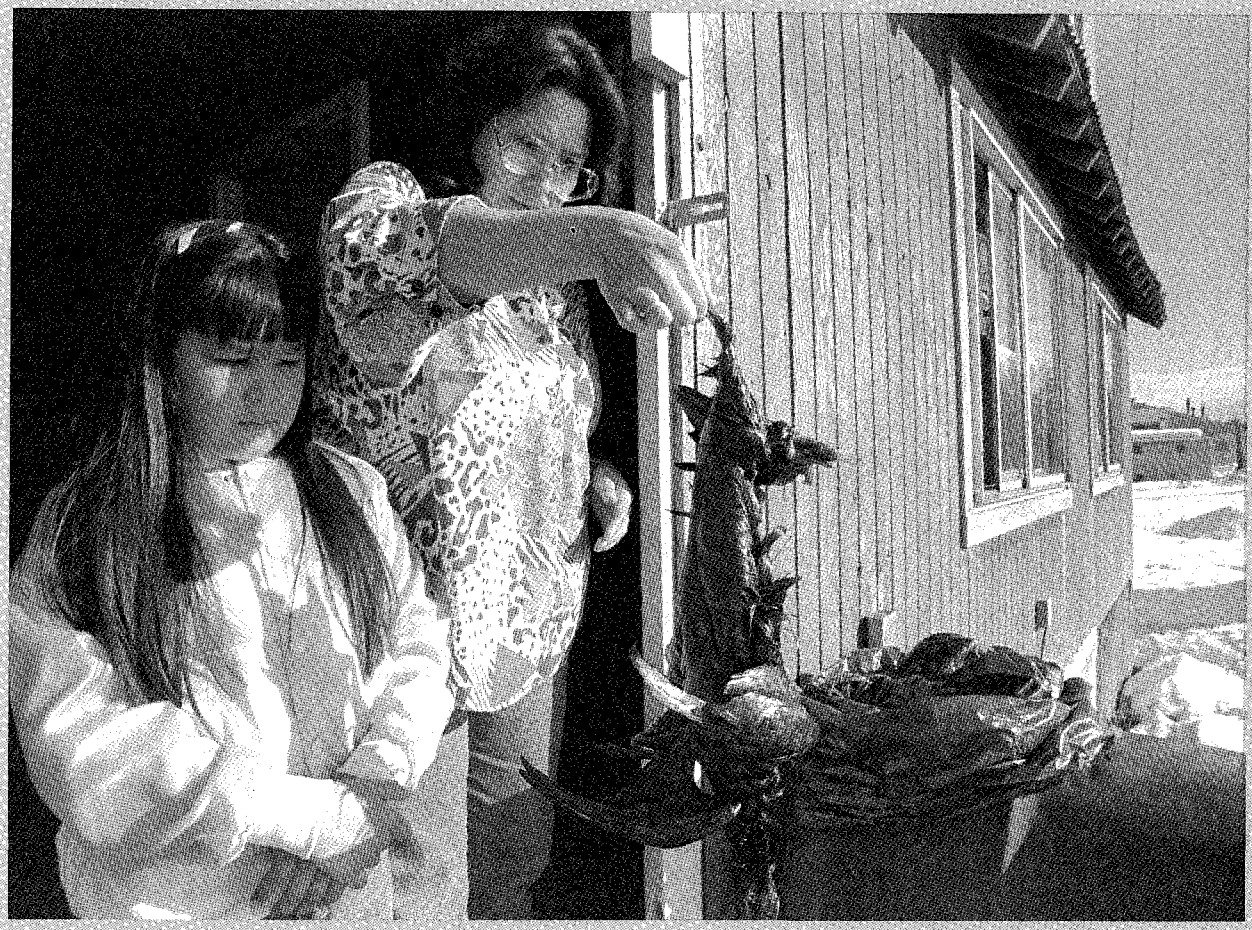

One in a long series of indignities: The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill leftthe native villages on Prince William Sound with contaminated, inedible fish.

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Unfettered by the need to provide civil service protections to their employees, they cut staff and streamlined operations more aggressively than the federal government itself could have.

And then came the attacks of September 11, 2001. Instantly, officials all over Washington were looking to spend lots of money on defense and homeland security contracts, the sooner the better. The native corporations looked like perfect vehicles. In 2003, Nana Pacific, another subsidiary of a native corporation, won a $70 million award from the Defense Department to rebuild the Iraqi port of umm-Qasr; it subcontracted with one of the world's leading port construction firms, SSA-Marine, and handed off the operation of the contract. In another instance, currently under investigation by the House Armed Services Committee, two large security companies—Wackenhut and Vance International—won a series of sole-source contracts collectively worth $180 million by partnering with Alaskan native firms. Both companies had previously bid on similar contracts on their own and lost.

More West Virginia than Wild West

Alaska has a well-earned reputation as a rough, bootstrapping state, with a boisterous, counter-establishment character. It is a place beyond the American boundary, populated by gangly moose and whales, by hippies who head for the curving black mountain slopes, by those on a libertarian quest to get away from places with rules. In downtown Anchorage, wobbly old 12-seat planes fly overhead, bound for villages that can't be reached any other way, ferrying passengers in search of ever more remote locales.

But while the state thrives on its identity as the last frontier, it is in many ways less like the Wild West than West Virginia. Like its poor, rugged Appalachian cousin, Alaska's economy is overwhelmingly dependent on other people's tax money; it is by far the nation's largest per capita recipient of federal cash. And, as with West Virginia, it is represented in Washington by an aging senator who uses his appropriations power to keep the state's economy afloat almost single-handedly.

Stevens rivals his West Virginia counterpart, Democratic Sen. Robert Byrd, in his ability to attract federal dollars. (Through his staff, Stevens declined interview requests for this article.) Some Alaskan economists estimate that Stevens is responsible for 10 percent of the state's economy. Stevens and Byrd are good friends, but in personal style, the two senators are near opposites: Byrd cultivates the public persona of a florid Southern gentleman, using Senate speeches to deliver elaborate appreciations of, say, the women of Congress, or the coming of Spring. Stevens's public image is of a force-of-nature senator from a force-of-nature state; when he brings appropriations bills to the Senate floor, the Alaskan wears a tie featuring the Incredible Hulk ('cause he's so

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strong), and when he's angry, he wears one depicting the Tasmanian Devil ('cause he might go crazy). But the more telling difference between Stevens and Byrd is in the ways in which they use federal power to do favors for their home states. But while Byrd has become a master of harnessing federal largesse primarily by physically transferring as much of the federal government as possible to his state—there is a reason, for instance, that the FBI's crime lab is in West Virginia—Stevens has branched in a different direction. Instead of funneling tax dollars through federal agencies, he channels them through federally dependent corporations.

This method is unquestionably more palatable to those who oppose the idea of government handouts to the poor. But the laissez-faire Stevens system has some significant downsides. For one, it distributes benefits unevenly. Those natives with the political savvy and organization to take advantage of the system have sometimes done very well. Those without it have floundered and the average native income in Alaska is still $11,000, while the portion of natives living in poverty continues to increase. The villagers in Tatitlik, shareholders in Chugach, love the system: It has provided them not only with dividend checks, but a range of other services, the kinds of things you might normally expect to come from government. Chugach Alaska sponsors scholarships for the college-bound children of its shareholders, and corporate internship programs after they graduate. The company sends quarterly checks to the tribal elders to supplement social security and pays for programs to preserve traditional languages and culture, which had been dramatically fading. Perhaps most important to the villagers, says Tatitlik's chief, Kompkoff, "it makes you proud to be Chugach again." Most Alaskan natives, however, have gotten far fewer benefits, and some have received almost nothing at all.

A more troubling downside is that some of the biggest dividends from the system don't flow to natives at all, but to other players in the game: the lobbyists who put the deals together, the principals who own the contracting firms, and even the politicians. Stevens has built a mini-political machine using the loophole. His loyalists run the Alaskan native corporations, delivering both votes and campaign contributions and sending substantial fees for lobbying services to a handful of the senator's ex-staffers and close associates, including Stevens's brother-in-law and his son. He returns favors to leading native corporation officials: In the 2005 Defense appropriation, Stevens inserted a line ordering the Air Force to spend $2.5 million to buy a parcel of land from Jake Adams, president of Arctic Slope and a longtime Stevens supporter. "I'm trying to help one family," the senator told the *Anchorage Daily News*. The system has even benefited Stevens personally: A recent *Los Angeles Times* investigation found that Stevens had bought into an Anchorage office tower which was then leased to Arctic Slope for $6 million per year. Stevens's stake, which he originally bought for $50,000, is now worth more than $1 million. Congress, whose ethics system has recently been watered down by the Republican leadership, has not launched any investigations.

All of which raises an obvious question: Who are these loopholes for?

What really drives the issue of native contracting is not political organizing or lobbying pressure or constituent demands but a blunt moral calculation: How do you repay historical debts and assuage a nation's guilt? "We have given up an awful lot to be part of this country," says Buretta, the Chugach Corp. chair. "It doesn't seem unfair that we're now getting a little bit back." Buretta and others argue that the program has helped the native corporations grow and that Chugach and others are beginning to win competitive contracts. But these competitive deals still account for only a slim minority of Chugach's government business. And if the overarching goal is to provide a better life for the Eskimos, it would be far simpler and many times cheaper for the government to simply send along a check. It is hard to argue that sluicing the tax dollars through no-bid contracting deals somehow makes Alaska natives any less dependent upon political aid. Instead, it simply changes the nature of what the natives are dependent on, from government welfare spending to government loophole spending.

The question of whether these contracting schemes are really the best way to help Alaskan natives deserves a serious debate. Instead, Washington seems to be shoring up and expanding their special privileges. On the Democratic side, Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) has already won certain contracting advantages for his islands' natives that are modeled on, though not as substantial as, the Alaskan program. Earlier this year, the Alaskan Natives joined with other contracting companies to found the Native American Contracting Association, a new group whose goal is to expand contracting opportunities and privileges to all American natives. In the lower 48, several native contracting firms have entered the arena—a firm called S&K Technologies, jointly owned by the Salish and Kootenai tribes is partnering with Chugach on a base management contract for Iraq.

When the plugged-in Chickasaw tribe of Oklahoma lost out on a Defense Department contract last year, they used their influence with Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) and the Bush administration to reign down holy terror on the DOD's contracting officers. "If you'll excuse my language," one peeved DOD bureaucrat told *Indian Country Today*, "the Chickasaws went ape shit." And at last month's national Native American conference in Green Bay, the nation's tribes—many of which have been skeptical of, or outright opposed to, special exemptions for Alaskan native corporations—voted to support the retention of the Alaskan privileges.

Indian tribes aren't the only ones eager to see the exemption expanded. While some in Washington are uneasy about its costs and corrupting effects, many in the GOP leadership view it as a model for the kind of federal government they would like to see more of. It is a privatized system that circumvents the civil service, enriches politically-connected corporations, provides a trickle of money to the poor, and secures Republican power. For some conservatives, in other words, the Eskimo loophole is not a failed experiment in social engineering. It is the future. ◆

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Why Not Hillary?

She can win the White House.

By Carl M. Cannon

In 1978, while covering California politics, I found myself on election night at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, which was serving as a kind of election central. Waiting for the returns to come in, I was sitting in the lobby having a drink with my father—who, then as now, was the leading expert on Ronald Reagan. As if on cue, the former actor and ex-California governor came striding into the hotel. Even then Reagan looked the part: wide-shouldered, flanked by a security detail, sporting his trademark blue serge suit, every black hair in place.

The only thing missing, I thought, was the Marine Corps Band.

No one back east took Reagan nearly as seriously as he seemed to be taking himself. Despite a devoted following among what were then known as Goldwater Republicans, the Washington cognoscenti casually dismissed Reagan as too conservative, too old, a B-movie actor who once played second fiddle to a chimpanzee. "Who does he think he is?" I asked my dad. "The president of the United States?"

"No," came the reply. "He thinks he's the *next* president of the United States." After a pause, he added, "And he might be."

I remember that vignette every time a political sage says authoritatively that Hillary Rodham Clinton will "never" be president.

This is a particularly entrenched bit of conventional wisdom, which seems to have metastasized into a kind of secret handshake. If you "know" Clinton can't be president, you're a member of the Washington in-crowd. If you don't, you're an outsider, some boob from the sticks of, I don't know, Sacramento or somewhere. Suburban Chicago, maybe. You know the rap: She's too liberal, too polarizing, a feminist too threatening to male voters. Too much baggage. Too... *Clinton.*

And these are Democrats talking. Bizarrely, the party's insiders are going out of their way to tear down the credentials and prospects of one of their rare superstars. Conservative columnist Robert Novak ran into this phenomenon recently while speaking to eight local Democratic politicians in Los Angeles. Novak told them matter-of-factly that Hillary was the odds-on favorite to be their party's 2008 nominee—and that no one was in second place. Novak was surprised by their reaction: Not one was for Mrs. Clinton. Why? "They think she is a loser," said one of the Democrats.

With some exceptions, the journalistic pack seems nearly as negative about Hillary Clinton's chances. I'm a charter member of an informal lunch group of writers who runs the gamut from conservative to liberal, and each month when we meet, Hillary's name arises. Around the table it goes: She can't be elected in a general election; men aren't willing to vote for a woman like Hillary; women don't think much of her marriage—or her, for staying in it; which red state could she possibly carry? What swing voter would she convince? Each month, I marshaled my arguments in favor of Hillary's candidacy, until finally I began sparing my friends the whole rap by just noting—for the minutes of the meeting, as it were—that I disagree with them.

Perhaps my lunch mates, those worried activist Democrats, and the majority of Washington pundits are correct. But I don't think so.

They certainly weren't right about Reagan.

Conservatives (and liberals) would consider it heresy to compare Ronald Reagan and Hillary Clinton. And Reagan is certainly a hard act to follow. He combined Main Street sensibilities and a soothing Middle America persona with an uplifting vision of America's place in the world that earned him a stunningly decisive victory in 1980—and 60 percent of the vote when he ran for reelection four years later. Sen. Clinton is a more polarizing figure, in more polarized times. Yet Clinton, like Reagan, can lay claim to the passions of die-

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Carl M. Cannon covers the White House for *National Journal*, an authoritative, non-partisan weekly Washington magazine on politics and government.

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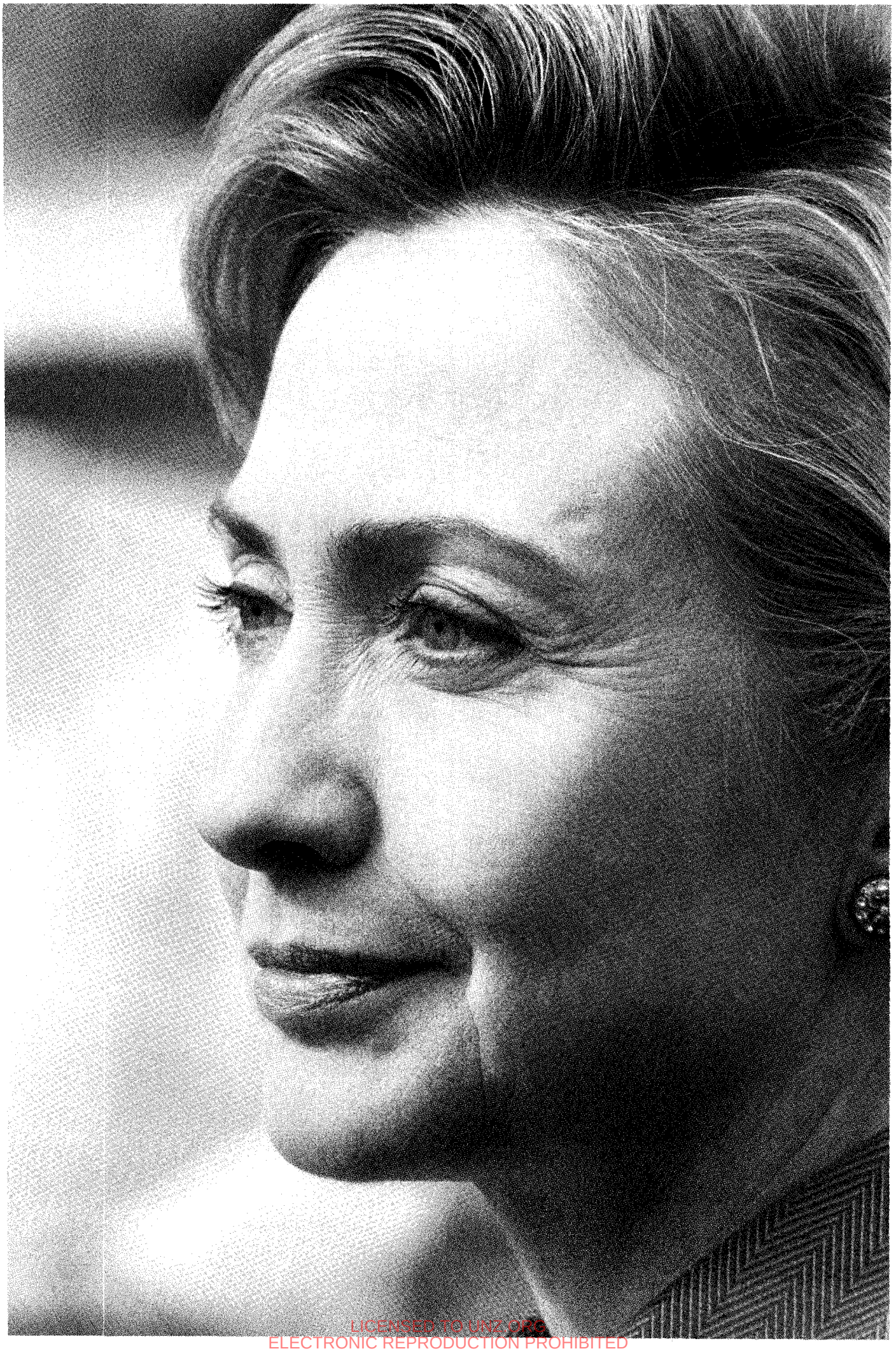

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hard grassroots members of her party. With the exception of incumbents and vice presidents, no candidate since Reagan has had a hammerlock on his or her party's nomination this long before the election. And like Reagan, the charisma gap between her and any would-be challengers in her own party is palpable.

Of course, the question is not whether she can win the primary. Most Democrats concede the primary is probably hers for the taking. "I don't know how you beat her for the Democratic nomination," former Sen. Bob Kerrey told *New York* magazine. "She's a rock star." But that, as the cognoscenti see it, is the problem. She can't lose the primary, and she can't win the general election. And so they look vainly for an alternative—Warner? Biden? Bayh? Oh my!—always circling back to the same despairing fear of another four years in the political wilderness. Democrats have raised this kind of defeatism to a high art. But it's time for Democrats to snap out of it and take a fresh look at the hand they've been dealt. Hillary Rodham Clinton can win the general election no matter who the Republicans throw at her. The Democrats just might be holding aces.

Poll positioned

The available data do not suggest she is unelectable—they suggest just the opposite. A Gallup poll done a week before Memorial Day showed Sen. Clinton with a favorable rate of 55 percent. True, her unfavorable number is 39 percent, which is high enough for concern—but one that is nearly identical to Bush's on the eve of his reelection. And the unfavorable rating registered by Republican contender Bill Frist was nearly as high as his favorable numbers, with 32 percent saying they'd never heard of him.

Then there was this eye-opening question:

If Hillary Rodham Clinton were to run for president in 2008, how likely would you be to vote for her—very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

Very likely	29%
Somewhat likely	24
Not very likely	7
Not at all likely	40
No opinion	1

At the risk of laboring the point, 29 percent plus 24 percent adds up to a majority. I can hear my pals answering this as they read these numbers: "Yes, but that's before the conservative attack machine gets a hold of her..."

Well, no, it isn't. They've been going at her with verbal tire irons, machetes, and sawed-off shotguns for 12 years now. Sen. Clinton's negatives are already figured into her ratings. What could she be accused of that she hasn't already confronted since she entered the public eye 14 years ago? Clinton today is in a position similar to Bush's at the beginning

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of 2004. Democrats hoped that more information about the president's youth would knock him down. But voters had already taken the president's past into account when they voted for him in 2000. More information just wasn't going to make a dent. In fact, as the spring of 2005 turned to summer there were yet another book and a matched spate of tabloid broadsides. In the face of it all, Hillary appears, if anything, to be getting stronger. Indeed, the more the right throws at her, the easier it is for her to lump any criticism in with the darkest visions of the professional Clinton bashers.

Let's also look deeper into that Gallup survey because the closer you look at it, the more formidable Sen. Clinton seems. Thirty percent of the poll's respondents consider Hillary a "moderate," while 9 percent described her a "conservative." Now, I'm not sure which newspapers that 9 percent have been reading (the *Daily Worker*?), but the fact that nearly 40 percent of the electorate does not identify her as liberal mitigates the perception that she's considered too far to the left to be a viable national candidate.

Such perceptions are hardly set in stone, however, and senators' voting records can come back to haunt them in the heat of a campaign as John Kerry learned in 2004 and countless others have learned before him. It's no accident that the last sitting U.S. senator elected president was John F. Kennedy. Thus, Clinton's Senate voting record, and where it puts her on the ideological scale, is worth some additional scrutiny.

The most comprehensive annual analysis of voting records is undertaken by my magazine, *National Journal*, which for 2004 used 24 votes on economic issues, 19 votes on social issues, and 17 foreign policy-related roll calls to rate all 100 U.S. senators. Its resulting ranking of John Kerry as the Senate's most liberal member (at least during 2003) was a gift from on high for the Bush campaign, and the Massachusetts senator spent the better part of his campaign trying to explain away this vote or that. But Sen. Clinton is harder to pigeon-hole. For 2004, Clinton's composite liberal score was 71 percent—putting her roughly in the middle of the Democratic caucus. While adhering to her party's liberal dogma on issues such as race, gun control, and judicial appointees, Hillary lists slightly toward the center on economic issues, and even more so on national security and foreign-policy issues. There's no telling at this point how the war in Iraq will play in 2008, but one thing is certain: Sen. Clinton won't struggle the way Kerry did to reconcile a vote authorizing the war with one not authorizing the $87 billion to pay for it. For better or worse, she voted "aye" both times.

Yet another piece of received Washington wisdom holds that the party could never nominate someone in 2008 who has supported the Iraq war. Perhaps. But history suggests that if Bush's mission in Iraq flounders, a politician as nimble as Clinton will have plenty of time to get out in front of any anti-war movement. If it succeeds, Hillary would have demonstrated the kind of steadfastness demanded by the soccer moms turned security moms with whom Bush did so well in 2004.

On domestic issues, Sen. Clinton has also shown a willingness to step out of the safety zone. She is bolstering her bipartisan credentials by teaming up with Republicans from the other side of the aisle, such as Lindsey Graham and Frist himself, making her more difficult to portray as some kind of radical. And while her liberal voting record on social issues remains intact, she has taken rhetorical steps toward the middle. The most notable example occurred during a January speech in Albany, in which she advised abortion-rights activists to seek "common ground... with people on the other side." While pledging to defend *Roe v. Wade*, Mrs. Clinton referred to abortion as a "sad, even tragic, act" and called on Democrats to embrace a moral language for discussing the issue. Some conservatives even seemed receptive. In some quarters, Hillary's centrist posture was portrayed as new, but it actually isn't: She butted heads with the Arkansas teachers' union in the mid-1980s over a proposal she led to improve teacher quality.

The abortion speech was reminiscent of her husband's 1992 campaign-trail criticism of Sister Souljah for advocating violence against white people. Her remarks simultaneously showed she was willing to talk common sense to a key Democratic interest group while putting herself in sync with the ambivalent sensibilities most Americans have toward abortion. And because of the high standing she enjoys among Democratic women, she was able to do it without any fear of liberal backlash. Let's face it: When a feminist with Hillary's credentials discusses abortion in the way she has, it causes people to sit up and take notice.

Which brings us to the ultimate question: Hillary's gender. Will Americans vote for a woman?

They certainly say they will: 74 percent told Gallup that they'd be either "somewhat" or "very" likely to vote for a woman in 2008. This number is actually on the low side compared to polls from the pre-Hillary era, for the obvious reason that Clinton casts a shadow over 2008, and many of the respondents are Republicans who plan to vote against her. Again, I can hear some of my friends murmuring that these voters aren't telling the truth. But that's precisely the kind of snobbish thinking that never gets Democrats anywhere, that is usually wrong, and that infuriates swing voters. My advice to my Democratic friends is to ignore your inner elitist, and trust the American people to tell the truth, and, moreover, to do the right thing.

In fact, there is no reason to doubt them, as they've been proving their willingness to pull the lever for female candidates for a long time. In 1999, when Hillary first entered the national scene, 56 women sat in the House of Representatives, and nine in the Senate. Only three women were governors, but many women were in the pipeline in state gov-

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There are a thousand movable parts in a presidential campaign, but the two most indispensable are a candidate with charisma, money, and a broad following in his or her party; and a ticket that espouses values and policies that Middle Americans agree with. A candidate, the polls now suggest, like Hillary Clinton.

ernment: Nearly 28 percent of statewide elective offices in the country were occupied by women. In one state, Arizona, women held the top five statewide offices. And that pipeline produced. Six years later, there are 14 women in the Senate, and 66 in the House (along with another three non-voting delegates). There are eight, not three, women governors. "The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation," Susan B. Anthony once predicted. That day is fast approaching whether or not conservatives are ready for it, and whether or not liberals are willing to acknowledge it.

Map quest

Nonetheless, anyone who maintains that the American electorate is ready for a female president (and this particular female candidate) must at some point confront the Electoral College map. This, my skeptical friends claim, is where Hillary's hopes runs aground. Putting it plainly, they challenge anyone to come up with a red state that Hillary can carry—someplace, anyplace, where Sen. Clinton could run stronger than the Kerry/Edwards ticket.

It is, of course, absurd to look at electoral politics at such an atomic level this far out. In due time, pollsters and the press will christen 2008's must-have swing voters and must-win swing states. But calibrating a candidacy to the last election is a fool's errand. The near-frozen electoral map of the last five years has been an historical anomaly, not the rule. So there's no reason to believe that a 2004 electoral map would be terribly useful three years hence.

But if we must, let's play along. What red state could Clinton snatch away from the GOP column? How about Florida? The Gold Coast considers itself part of New York anyway, and Clinton's moderate overtures might draw swing voters from upstate. Cuban Americans are no longer the sole Latino voting bloc in Florida—and even Cubans are no longer monolithic. If not Florida, how about Iowa and New Mexico? They are centrist, bellwether states—and states Hillary's husband carried both times he ran. Meanwhile, the Republican Party hardly has a lock on Ohio, which went for Clinton twice, and which was close in 2000 and 2004.

The fact is, there are a thousand movable parts in a presidential campaign, but the two most indispensable are (1) a candidate with charisma, money, and a broad following in his or her party; and (2) a ticket that espouses values and policies that Middle Americans agree with. A candidate, the polls now suggest, like Hillary Clinton.

Or John McCain.

The Bubba factor

After dissecting an upcoming race, any good horse player will look at the Racing Form again and figure out if he (or she) missed anything: Who could beat the obvious horse? For the 2008 presidential run, there is an answer that jumps off the page: If the Republican faithful are smart enough to nominate him, John Sydney McCain III would probably be their most formidable candidate—if he gets the GOP nomination, a big "if."

It's fanciful to suggest that anyone is unbeatable this far out, even McCain. While he makes the media swoon, the Arizona senator would have to thread a pretty tight needle to get to the White House. A Quinnipiac Poll taken in March showed a McCain-Clinton election virtually tied, 43-41. These are good numbers, but they're hardly in the Colin Powell range. The Republican conservative base remains leery of him. That this antipathy is self-defeating (or even inexplicable) makes it no less real. In addition, the easiest circumstances to envision that would benefit McCain would be if there were widespread disillusion with Bush. But the issue most likely to bring that about—a dire result to the occupation in Iraq—probably doesn't help McCain anyway: If anything, he's been more hawkish on foreign policy than the president. Even if other factors—a rotten economy or a scandal—led to a McCain general election candidacy, a GOP meltdown might carry McCain to the nomination, but it wouldn't help him against Hillary Clinton. First, if conservatives could muster only half-hearted passion for the man, (not unlike the less-than-enthusiastic support John Kerry received from many Democrats) well, we've seen that movie. No candidate is without vulnerabilities, and certainly Hillary has hers. (I'll leave their enumeration to my counterpart, Amy Sullivan.) The difference between a winning and losing campaign, though, is whether you have the strategy to weather the inevitable rough waters.

On the *USS George W. Bush*, Karl Rove is considered the indispensable navigator. But when one looks on the Democratic side, who is a match for the man Bush called "The Architect" of his triumph? What recent Democrat has shown such an ability to see the political chessboard 20

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moves ahead and plot a winning game plan? Only one, and to find him, Sen. Clinton need only look to the other side of the breakfast table.

President Clinton doesn't come without strings attached. While it is an article of faith among the Clintonistas that Al Gore hurt his own campaign in 2000 by not using Bill Clinton more on the stump, there was plenty of polling to back up Gore's gambit. While Clinton could stir up the party faithful, his presence wasn't always a net plus. Hillary faces a similar dilemma when it comes to her husband—and a lot closer to home. But in addition to being able to draw upon Clinton's strategic gifts, Sen. Clinton would almost certainly not make the more serious mistake Gore made: not being able to successfully make use of the Clinton administration's record of 22 million new jobs; steady income growth for workers of every level; precipitous declines in the welfare rolls; and an expanded NATO alliance that ushered in the post Cold War geopolitical map.

Will Americans remember the optimism and idealism espoused in 1992 by The Man From Hope, and the way Clinton would parry policy questions with long, coherent, informative answers? Or will they remember their disgust at the revelations about the infamous blue dress, and how Clinton often shaded the truth?

No repentance, however sincere, could spare Bill Clinton from his eternity as fodder for the tabloids and late-night monologues. But he seems to be growing increasingly sure-footed and confident in his role as elder statesman. He has formed a friendship with the man he defeated for the office, and a productive working relationship with the current president. If he is to help his wife, all Clinton needs to do is remind us of his better angels, as he did during his tour of tsunami-devastated South Asia.

This brings us back to Hillary herself. Even if Bill Clinton rises to the occasion, voters are going to remember the yin and the yang of our 42nd president, and they are going to chew on the fact that the woman who wants to be our 44th is married to him. She will be asked about the marriage. How she answers will go a long way toward determining the viability of her candidacy. In his astute book on the Clinton presidency, John F. Harris recounts how aides broached the subject of her marriage as Hillary prepared to run for the Senate. How would she answer this basic question: Why had she stayed with him?

"Yes, I've been wondering that myself," Hillary says playfully.

Then Bill interjects: "Because you're a sticker! That's what people need to know—you're a sticker. You stick at the things you care about."

Clintonites love this story, but there are a couple of things wrong with it. First, Bill Clinton is providing the answer, but it's not his answer to give. Second, it's a talking point. The Clintons are good at slogans, but this is a question women will have for Hillary Clinton, women looking to identify with her. A sound bite answer just might confirm voters' fears that her marriage is a sham, and that she's an opportunist. On the other hand, if the answer emerges that she loves Bill Clinton, despite his flaws, and that she's in an imperfect marriage—well, most marriages are imperfect. Moreover, if she suggests that the deciding factor was her concern for their daughter, well, that's the kind of pro-family cred that really matters. Cute answers won't cut it. Authenticity will. And there's every reason to believe both Clintons could summon it when talking about the daughter to whom they are so obviously devoted.

Finally, there is one perceived pitfall—and that's Hillary's penchant for the jugular. Party activists admire her for this, but successful general election candidates learn to temper the instincts that result in outbursts like the "vast, right-wing conspiracy." In upstate New York, Sen. Clinton has charmed independent Yankee farmers and small-town Republican businessmen from Buffalo with an inclusive, upbeat style of campaigning and governing. This is the dress rehearsal for running nationwide, yet when she gets going on the red meat circuit Sen. Clinton retains a fondness for *ad hominem* attacks and paranoid world views.

"There has never been an administration, I don't believe in our history, more intent upon consolidating and abusing power to further their own agenda," Clinton said at a recent Democratic fundraiser. "Why can't the Democrats do more to stop them? I can tell you this: It's very hard to stop people who have no shame about what they're doing.... It is very hard to stop people who have never been acquainted with the truth." The crowd loved it, but this rant manages to ignore Nixon, while simultaneously sounding Nixonian. Hillary can definitely have a tin ear.

Hillary Clinton, whether she realizes it or not, is relieved of the obligation to pander in this way. She has paid her dues to the Democratic Party, and she doesn't have to prove her bona fides to anyone. From now on, she only need emulate Reagan, a fellow Illinois native, who campaigned with positive rhetoric and a smile on his face, trusting that the work he'd done cultivating his base would pay off, and that he needed mainly to reassure independent-minded voters. When we in the press corps tried to bait Reagan into going negative by asking why he'd abandoned the party of his youth, he invariably smiled, cocked his head, and gave the same line. "I didn't leave the Democratic Party," Reagan would say. "The Democratic Party left me."

As a girl, Hillary Rodham was a Goldwater Republican. She could use the same line in reverse. It might remind swing voters why they are looking, once again, at casting their lot with a candidate named Clinton. She can do this because Democrats are poised to back her already, and because much of the rest of America is watching, open-minded, half-hoping that she gives them a reason to support her, too. ◆

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Hillary in 2008?

Not so fast.

By Amy Sullivan

For a first-time candidate and controversial first lady, Hillary Clinton's bid for the open New York Senate seat in 2000 was going surprisingly well. From the beginning, she had staked out a seemingly impossible strategy, given who she was: ignore the press, go straight to the voters, and focus exclusively on issues, never on herself. "You make a mistake if you let any campaign become about you," she told Michael Tomasky, one of the reporters who followed her that year. Given that even campaigns not involving Hillary Clinton sometimes manage to become about Hillary Clinton, it was difficult to imagine how she could pull off this feat. Still, she stuck doggedly to policy talk, boring the press corps but impressing New York voters. Two weeks before Election Day, she enjoyed a comfortable lead, polling eight points ahead of opponent Rick Lazio.

And that's when Lazio decided to take matters into his hands and make the race about Clinton whether she liked it or not. His campaign put together a commercial intended to target her biggest vulnerability: white suburban women. All throughout the campaign, this demographic had been the most skeptical; in focus groups, even women who liked Clinton said she reminded them of an unpleasant woman in their lives—a mother-in-law or a stern Catholic nun or a judgmental neighbor. The ad sought to remind them that, deep down, they didn't really like Hillary Clinton, that they thought she was too ambitious. On the screen, a woman making dinner in a kitchen talked on a phone, her tone angry: "We started out at the bottom and worked our tushes off to get somewhere. No, but Hillary, she wants to start at the top, you know, the senator from New York."

The ad was the most personal of the race, and it worked. Within days, Clinton's lead had shrunk to three points, within the margin of error. Although she recovered to win the Senate seat with 55 percent of the vote, Clinton's advantage among women was only half that of Al Gore's, who won New York's female vote by a margin of 65 to 31.

Five years later, Sen. Clinton is a major player on the political scene. Her name is first on the lips of anyone who talks about the 2008 race for the White House. Potential rival John McCain says she would make a fine president. Conservatives such as Newt Gingrich and Bill Kristol are talking up Clinton, warning their partisan colleagues that she would be a formidable opponent. That's not surprising—after all, Republicans have long fantasized about the prospect of taking on Hillary Clinton again at a national level. But now, talk of her candidacy has gone from conservative wishful thinking to serious discussions within her own party, which is anxious to end its losing streak and is considering the advantages of closing ranks behind an early frontrunner. One glance at polls showing that 53 percent of Americans are willing to consider putting Clinton in the White House makes visions of sugar plums and oval offices dance in the heads of Democratic Party leaders. The high name recognition, impressive early poll numbers, and desperate party all carry the Senate whiff of inevitability that accompanied George W. Bush's campaign for the 2000 election.

In the face of this momentum, someone has to say it, so here goes: Please don't run, Senator.

Don't get me wrong. I'm a longtime Hillary Clinton fan. As in a back-when-she-was-still-wearing-headbands fan. I have found her warm and utterly charming in person; more than that, she understands the challenges facing Democrats in a way that few others in the party do, and her ability to

Amy Sullivan is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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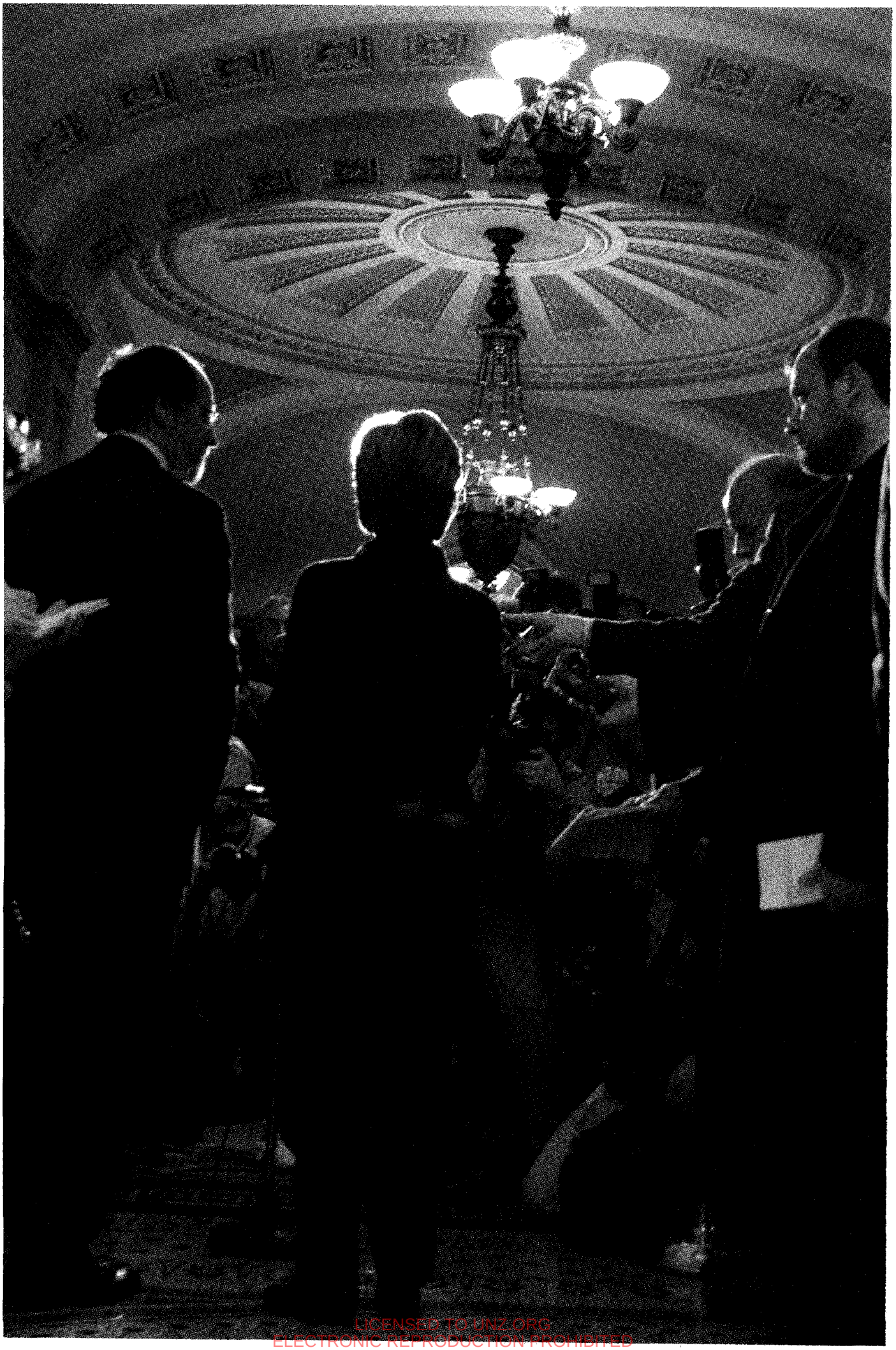

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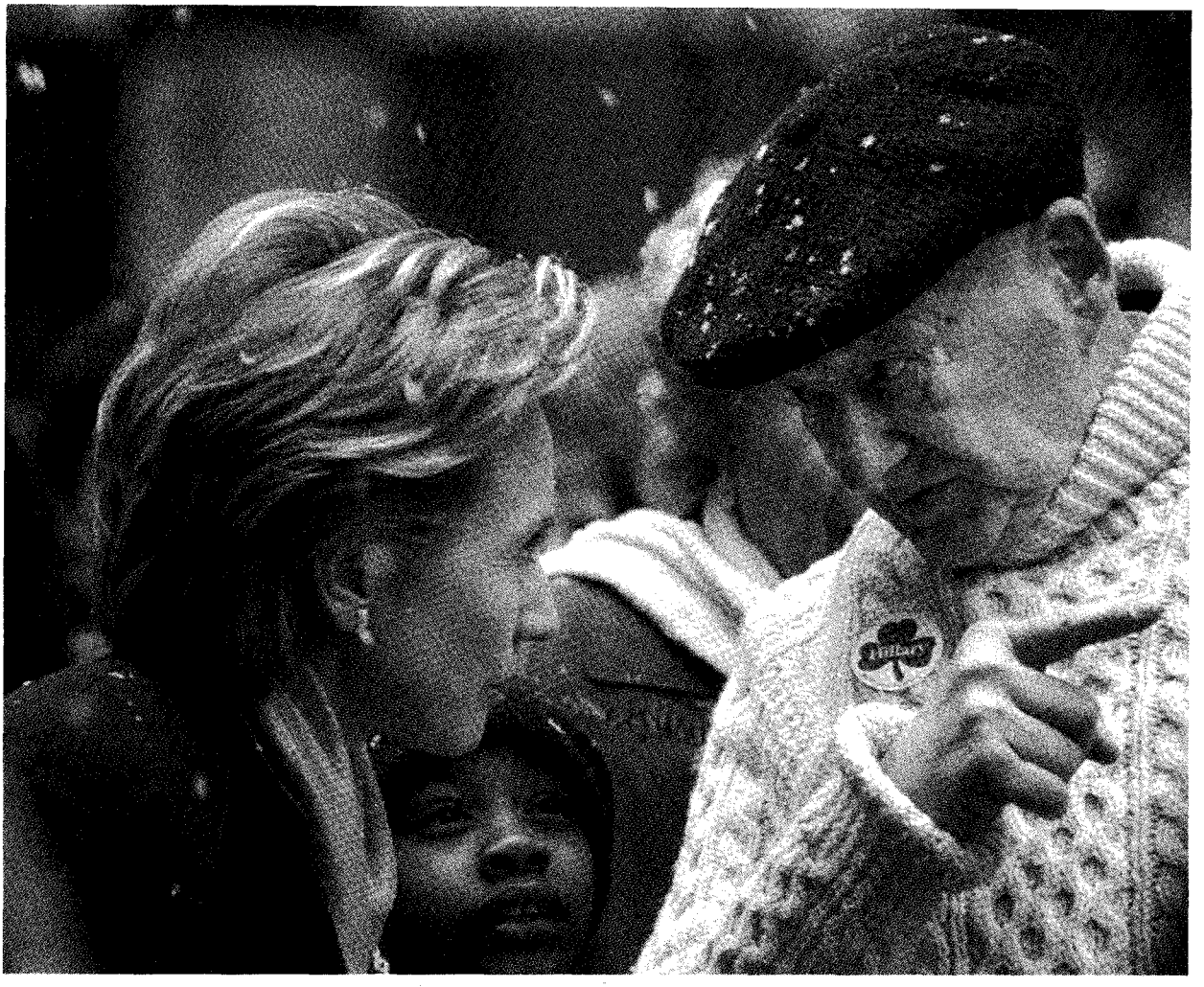

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absorb policy nuances rivals her husband's. This country is long past due for a female president, and I would love to see Hillary Clinton in that trailblazing role (and not just because it would make Ann Coulter break out in giant hives). But—at the risk of getting myself permanently blackballed by her loyal and protective staff—while Clinton can win nearly any debate that is about issues, she cannot avoid becoming *the* issue in a national campaign. And when that happens, she will very likely lose.

No such thing as undecided

It's not exactly news that Hillary Clinton is a polarizing figure. Ever since Newt Gingrich's mother whispered to Connie Chung on national television that she thought Mrs. Clinton was, well, a bitch, Americans have understood that the ex-first lady provokes intense emotions on all sides. Still, it's not hard to see why Hillary boosters are tempted to think that voters might be willing to take a new look at her and why politically astute people are turning cartwheels over the idea of her candidacy.

Over the last five years, Clinton has developed into perhaps the most interesting politician in America. She has a reputation for bipartisanship in the Senate, forming partnerships with some of her most conservative Republican colleagues, including Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), and Sam Brownback (R-Kan.). She has quietly, but firmly, assumed a leadership role in her own caucus. And she has shown vision and backbone in a party that is accused of having none.

Years before most Washington Democrats started worrying about the party's reputation on "moral values," Clinton was bringing Jim Wallis and other progressive religious leaders to talk with her colleagues about reclaiming the concepts of faith and values. She voted for the Iraq war when that wasn't a popular position for a Democrat to take, and has been willing to speak uncomfortable truths in difficult venues. In January, she told a crowd of over 1,000 assembled pro-choice activists that the way they have been talking about abortion is wrong, that many Americans won't even listen to them until they admit that it would be better if most women didn't have to face the "sad, even tragic choice" of having one. More recently, she cosponsored the "Workplace Religious Freedom Act" after intense lobbying from women's groups that oppose the legislation.

There's no one tougher. No one understands better that Middle America cares about both economic issues *and* cultural concerns. At the same time, no one is better at firing up the liberal base. Add to all of that approval ratings in the

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high 50s, and it sounds like you have the makings of a surefire winner for the Democrats.

And if it were any other candidate, that might be true. But with Hillary Clinton, everything's more complicated.

Let's look at those poll numbers that have Democrats pasting "Hillary '08" bumper stickers onto their Subaru Outbacks and Republicans pulling their Whitewater files out of the basement. Right now, Clinton is leaving her fellow Democratic contenders—including Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.), John Edwards (D-N.C.), and Joseph Biden (D-Del.)—in the dust. In polls that ask voters to identify which potential Democratic nominee they would back in 2008, she regularly clocks in at around 40 percent while her closest competitor rarely breaks the 20 percent mark.

It's important to remember, however, that polls taken this early in the process tend simply to reflect how well known a candidate is. (Kerry is surely as well-known as Clinton, but may be suffering in the polls from Democratic loser fatigue.) In 1997, for instance, George W. Bush led most polls of Republican prospects, in large part because many respondents thought they were being asked about his father. Hillary Clinton occupies the spot held by Al Gore at this point in the 2004 election cycle. She may well be the candidate most Democrats want to see as their nominee; or she could just be the one they know best. Right now, it's too early to know for certain.

In addition, while her "favorables" are good—57 percent of Americans have a positive impression of her—her negatives are disturbingly high as well. This long before an election, most voters have yet to make up their mind about a candidate. Even as close to the primaries as December 2003, 66 percent of voters didn't know what they thought of John Kerry. That's not the case with Clinton. While at this point in George W. Bush's first presidential campaign, Bush also had favorable ratings around the mid-50s, an additional 30 percent of voters said they either hadn't made up their minds about him or they didn't know who he was. Compare that to Hillary: Only 7 percent of respondents aren't sure what they think of her, and—not surprisingly—no one says they haven't heard of her.

Never in American political history has a candidate faced such a decided electorate at this early a point in a presidential race. That's a disadvantage when you consider that one of the lessons of 2004 was that once voters develop a perception about a candidate, it's as immovable as superglue. No one who thought George W. Bush was a likable, friendly guy could be convinced that he was corrupt or misleading. And once John Kerry became identified in voters' minds as a "flip-flopper," no amount of arguing could change that image. It's a problem for any candidate. For Sen. Clinton, it could be fatal. Americans know exactly what they think of her. And nearly 40 percent say they would never consider voting for her.

Shaking hands, changing minds

Of course, there is one proven way that Hillary Clinton has changed voters' perceptions. In her first Senate race, the strategy was simple: Meet as many voters as possible, and ignore the scandal-focused press. It paid off—when Clinton launched her campaign, only 41 percent of New Yorkers were prepared to vote for her; she won in November 2000 with 55 percent of the vote after having visited each of the state's 62 counties, many of them repeatedly.

Operation Smother the Voters worked in large part because the real Hillary Clinton is a far cry from the caricature of a manipulative, power-hungry, shrewish woman that has been propagated by the right. One of the unexpected benefits of being demonized and attacked by conservatives for more than a decade turns out to be that voters are surprised and relieved when she doesn't fly into town on a broomstick. Tomasky relates the response of voters when they actually met the woman they'd heard so much about for eight years in *Hillary's Turn*, his excellent book about Clinton's 2000 campaign. "People had expected Hillary to instruct and talk, and, let's face it, to come across as pushy and judgmental," he wrote. "So when she paid genuine attention to the things people were saying, she really threw them." Indeed, the first time I met the Clintons, the president distractedly shook some hands after a speech and then left fairly quickly while the first lady was the one who displayed the vaunted Clinton political skills—chatting easily about policy details, focusing intently on what my colleague and I had to say, and then throwing her arms around our shoulders for a photo that looks more like three college friends than two awed congressional staffers and a first lady.

The strategy also succeeded because many voters—weaned on a diet of conservative talking points during the 1990s—expected Clinton to be a liberal of the bluest sort, to the left of Ted Kennedy and unable to understand their concerns. What they found was that her positions on welfare, crime, and foreign policy, among other issues, were far more centrist than liberal. In addition, while most professional political observers dismissed her "Listening Tour" as a stunt, Clinton actually used it to query New Yorkers about their problems and obsessively study up on local issues.

All of this is impressive. But if the ability to work a rope line or a town hall meeting was the key ingredient to winning a national race, our political history would be quite different. In *What It Takes*, his chronicle of the 1988 presidential race, the journalist Richard Ben Cramer describes watching Dick Gephardt entrance voters with his earnest, determined approach and piercing blue eyes. "Sweet Jesus, he is terrific," Cramer writes. "There aren't ten voters in the country who'd work against him, once he's had them face-to-face." Similarly, last winter, many political reporters chalked up John Kerry's surprising comeback in Iowa to

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No, Democrats, it's not fair. Hillary Clinton may be the best thinker the party has, she's a much better campaigner than anyone expected, and she's already survived endless personal assaults. But wishing the country would grow up and get over the 1990s, that she could be evaluated on her personal merit, won't make it so.

the fact that he'd spent countless evenings in individual homes, talking to voters until he had convinced each person to support him. No candidate, however, meets every voter face-to-face *en route* to the White House.

Anyone running for office would prefer to meet as many voters as possible in person. The stakes are higher for Hillary Clinton: She *has* to meet personally with voters in order to have a chance of changing their minds about her. If she runs for the White House, the vast majority of Americans will learn what they know about her campaign through the media. And that's where the second half of Sen. Clinton's New York strategy falls apart.

"Nurse Ratched"

When a candidate's name recognition is at 100 percent in a statewide campaign, she can afford to turn a few campaign saws about the media upside-down. For the 2000 Clinton campaign, no press was good press; "the smaller the circus, the better," one of her staffers told Tomasky. They considered it a victory when the traveling press corps—bored by the lack of news made by Clinton's "Listening Tour" and its endless focus on the minutiae of dairy compacts and traffic conditions on the Canadian border—winnowed from 250 reporters to 70 to about a dozen permanent scribes. Although the *New York Post*, and columnist Dick Morris in particular, nipped at Clinton's heels for the length of the campaign, she was able to conduct her image transformation largely in a vacuum.

It's safe to say that wouldn't be the case in 2008. The only way to reach voters in a nationwide campaign is through the media, both through purchased airtime and what is referred to as "free" media—coverage of campaign events and interviews with print and television reporters. It's a two-sided coin for candidates. They need journalists in order to get their messages across to the majority of Americans who won't get a chance to hear them in person, but they have no control over what gets reported or how it's framed in the press. Any Democrat running in the general election would face that challenge, although they might not yet know precisely how the press would cover their candidacy. Sen. Clinton, however, knows all too well what to expect. Her instincts were correct in 2000: When you're Hillary Clinton, "free" media always comes with a cost.

Journalists are often no different from voters in general—when they form an impression of a politician, many reporters filter coverage through what they think they know about the candidate. Reporters "knew" Al Gore was a serial exaggerator, that Kerry was an out-of-touch, aristocratic elitist, and that Bush was an amiable goof. They may not let ideological leanings color their coverage, but personal biases can affect what they choose to report and the narratives they choose to tell.

Jill Lawrence, one of *USA Today*'s campaign correspondents in 2004, has observed that very few political reporters wrote about the way Kerry used religious language—even though, she noted, it occurred every week on the campaign trail—because they assumed that Democratic candidates weren't deeply religious. "The stereotype of the Democratic Party is so deep that it never broke through," she said. That's already happening with Clinton, whose religious references and comments on abortion generated headlines early in 2005. Most news outlets characterized her remarks as a distinct break from the past—implying that she was transforming herself for a White House run—even though she is a former Sunday School teacher who has spoken publicly about religion for decades and her comments on abortion were consistent with her husband's mantra that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare."

Chemistry is also important for the press corps. Reporters are attracted to straight-talkers like John McCain, Rudy Giuliani, and—in 2003, at least—Howard Dean. Inaccessibility is definitely a turn-off; in the early years of the Clinton administration, the First Lady famously fought with *The Washington Post* over the release of documents about Whitewater. Her chilly relationship with the press has warmed considerably during her first term in the Senate, but Hillary Clinton still has far more skeptics than fans in the press corps.

Sometimes they go far beyond reportorial cynicism. *The Washington Post*'s reporter assigned to cover Clinton's first Senate race, Michael Grunwald, provides one illustration of how the press corps already feels about her. Describing the first lady as "bor[ing] New York into submission, droning on endlessly about focus-grouped Democratic issues," Grunwald accused her of "baldly deceptive and intentionally vacuous behavior" and "an intellectually and emotionally dishonest scheme to get a job without a résumé," and charged that "her only consistent ideology was a faith in political popularity." Ouch. More recently, on the Feb. 20, 2005, installment of "The Chris Matthews Show," a panel discussed Hillary's candidacy while calling her "Nurse

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Ratched" and a "castrating female persona"; things really got going when journalist Gloria Borger mimicked Clinton's laugh and mannerisms while her colleagues sniggered.

And that's coming from members of the mainstream media. The conservative press—never shy when it comes to Hillary Clinton—has spent the spring teeing up for another game of Hillaryball. The trial of David Rosen, the fundraiser for Clinton's 2000 campaign, who was accused of hiding about $800,000 of costs for a campaign event held in Los Angeles, came first. In the three months leading up to the verdict (Rosen was acquitted), the FOX News Channel ran more than a dozen segments on Rosen, including a "Hannity & Colmes" segment titled "Are Hillary's Presidential Chances Over?" Rosen's eventual acquittal merited barely a hiccup on FOX, which simply replaced Rosen coverage with segments on the next Clinton scandal story—yet another bestselling book taking on the Senator.

The Hillary effect

Edward Klein's *The Truth About Hillary: What She Knew, and How Far She'll Go to Become President* is, even by the low standards of the genre, vile. In seeking to portray Hillary Clinton as a cold, manipulative woman who will do anything for power, Klein relies on wholly unsubstantiated accusations of corruption, lesbianism, and marital rape. Most conservatives who gleefully anticipated the book's release are now distancing themselves from it. And liberals have derived some joy from scenes such as right-wing talk show host Sean Hannity sharply questioning Klein over his use of sources.

Klein apparently didn't get the memo about anti-Hillary strategy. Frontal assaults and reckless accusations are *sooo* 1990s, definitely déclassé. More to the point, they make conservatives sound scary and are counterproductive. But while Democrats are surely hoping that these attacks will spur a backlash and sympathy for Clinton, the more likely outcome is a draw. Americans may have lost their appetite for books like *Madame Hillary: The Dark Road to the White House* and *Hillary's Scheme: Inside the Next Clinton's Ruthless Agenda to Take the White House*, but many of them share the underlying concern about Clinton's motives and character. Likewise, while a Republican nominee would benefit from anti-Hillary donations—in the last few months of the 2000 race, Lazio averaged $1 million each week in hard money contributions from Hillary-haters outside of New York—Sen. Clinton's prodigious fundraising has the potential to neutralize that effort.

Conservatives won't trot out supposed lesbian lovers in 2008; they'll go after her more subtly. They know that 40 percent of the country can't stand Sen. Clinton, another 40 percent adores her, and the remaining 20 percent (which, according to those recent polls, seem to feel generally positive about her) is made up of fairly soft support. The best way to turn that support into opposition is to voice those age-old questions about the Clintons: She's inappropriately power-hungry and ambitious—remember that Tammy Wynette crack? He lacks moral character—do you really want him roaming the White House again? And don't forget health care—who elected her to that post anyway?

Another golden oldie—the charge that the Clintons will say anything to get ahead—is already being revived elliptically by conservatives. The day after Sen. Clinton's news-making abortion speech this past January, conservatives were all over the media, charging that she was undergoing a "makeover" of her political image. "I think what we're seeing is, at least rhetorically, the attempt of the ultimate makeover," Gary Bauer told *The Washington Times*. *Investors Business Daily* editorialized: "When husband Bill did it, it was called triangulation.... Now another Clinton running for president is telling different audiences what they want to hear." In the six months since, the "makeover" charge has been repeated more than 100 times in the press. Give them another six, and "makeover" will be the new "flip-flop."

The target audience for these whispers and insinuations—and, let's not be naïve, occasional television commercials—is a familiar demographic: suburban women. Democrats lost ground in the 2004 elections among white, married, working women, and it's generally accepted that to win back the White House, the party needs a nominee who can appeal to these women. There's no reason to think that Republicans wouldn't revive the same kind of personal attacks that Lazio brought out in the last week of the 2000 campaign. In that race, the Hillary effect that resulted in the loss of suburban women was masked by gains among upstate men. She'll have a much harder time winning their counterparts in those essential swing states, which makes it even more important that she be able to count on the women's vote. If the Republican strategy in 2008 results in the same outcome as 2000—if, in other words, Clinton's advantage among women was half that of Gore's—the margin of victory in states like Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Wisconsin will disappear. Game, set, match.

No, Democrats, it's not fair. Hillary Clinton is smart, she's paving a promising new path for her party, she's a much better campaigner than anyone ever expected, and she's already survived more personal assaults than anyone should have to endure. But wishing the country would grow up and get over the 1990s already, that she could wage a campaign of issues and be evaluated on her political merit, won't make it so. What's more, those daydreams—pleasant as they are to contemplate on a sunny afternoon—cast a shadow over the Democratic field that makes it difficult for a potentially viable candidate to emerge.

It's too early for anyone to say with certainty that Hillary Clinton can't win the White House. But it's far too early—and dangerous—to conclude that she's the best chance that Democrats have. ◆

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Dumb and Dumber

The Bush administration thinks negotiating with North Korea is appeasement. South Korea thinks negotiating requires appeasement.

By Soyoung Ho

In 1977, the North Korean government sent 9-year-old Kang Chul-Hwan and his family to a slave labor camp. While the regime never explained why, the Kang family assumed their imprisonment was retaliation for the activities of Kang's grandfather, who often sharply criticized the management mistakes of Communist Party bureaucrats. At the Yodok concentration camp, Kang ate rats and bugs to keep from starving and witnessed the executions of fellow prisoners. In 1987, at the age of 19, Kang was released along with his family. Not long afterwards, he and a friend crossed the Yalu River on foot into China, an escape route still used today by many North Korean defectors.

In 2001, Kang, by then a reporter for a leading conservative South Korean newspaper, published a memoir, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*. The book received little international attention until last April, when President Bush read the memoir on the recommendation of Henry Kissinger. Evidently moved by Kang's account, Bush asked his senior aides to read it as well. In June, Kang was invited to the White House to meet with the president, Vice President Cheney, and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. As Kang told *The New York Times* afterwards, "[President Bush] was more interested in the pains North Koreans are going through, more so than I had previously thought.... He kept on repeating how deeply sorry he was about the situation. To hear a president say these deep things made me feel that he cared." A calm and affable man, Kang, now 37, has been asked to speak about his experiences at Freedom House, a conservative human rights organization, and at an evangelical concert in Midland, Texas, devoted to aiding the plight of North Koreans. The conservative push has not only accelerated sales of Kang's book, but has also raised the profile of the issue of North Korean human rights among Americans.

In many regards, Bush's promotion of Kang's book shows the president at his best—using the bully pulpit to call evil by its name. Yet decrying North Korea's oppressive regime is not the same as actively working to effect change. Two decades ago, President Reagan stood among 20,000 Berliners and called on Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall." Less than four months later, Reagan and Gorbachev sat together at the negotiating table and signed a deal to reduce nuclear armaments. Things worked out pretty well from there.

But instead of following Reagan's example and showing an eagerness to both engage and confront North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, Bush has stubbornly prevented any direct dealings between the American and North Korean governments. Instead, the president continues to insist on arms-length multiparty talks to curb the North's nuclear weapons program—talks that have yielded no progress—apparently under the belief that to negotiate with a tyrant is to appease him.

In June, Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun appeared together in Washington to show a united political front. But the truth is that the two leaders could hardly be more different in their approaches and philosophies. Roh allows his government to work directly with Pyongyang on a range of issues, yet refuses to criticize the North's horrendous human rights record. The South Korean government's belief is nearly the opposite of the Bush administration's: To negotiate with a tyrant, Roh seems to think, you must appease him.

Neither approach makes much sense, and neither has achieved any progress. As Reagan and other presidents have shown, it's perfectly possible to negotiate with a brutal regime while publicly condemning its human rights record. Indeed, it's the best and perhaps only way to move forward. The sooner Washington and Seoul learn that lesson, the better.

Soyoung Ho is an assistant editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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Polar opposites

Kim Jong Il is no Gorbachev. But Bush's refusal to engage with Kim and his government is precisely what kept the United States from heading off the nuclear crisis in which we now find ourselves. In a recent *Washington Post* op-ed, former ambassador to South Korea Donald Gregg and Johns Hopkins scholar and journalist Don Oberdorfer revealed that, during a trip they took to North Korea in the fall of 2002, they were given a written personal message from Kim to pass along to Bush. In the note, Kim opened the door to settling the standoff then underway over North Korea's threat to take possession of some spent nuclear fuel rods that it could turn into fuel for nuclear weapons:

> "We took the message to senior officials at the White House and State Department and urged the administration to follow up on Kim's initiative, which we have not made public until now. Then deep in secret planning and a campaign of public persuasion for the invasion of Iraq, the administration spurned engagement with North Korea. Kim moved within weeks to expel the inspectors from the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and reopen the plutonium-producing facilities that had been shut down since 1994 under an agreement negotiated with the Clinton administration.
>
> Now the North Koreans are believed to have produced the raw material for at least a half-dozen nuclear weapons and many believe their claim to have fabricated the weapons themselves."

Though clearly distracted by the approaching invasion of Iraq, President Bush was also influenced by hard-line advisers such as Vice President Dick Cheney and then-Undersecretary of State John Bolton. According to their doctrine, any effort to work with a totalitarian regime will simply perpetuate its rule. The only moral goal is regime change, and the only way to achieve that is by isolating and confronting the communist government. As a result, hawks within the administration since 2003 have succeeded in quashing numerous attempts by senior State Department officials to coax Pyongyang back to the negotiating table through back-channel talks with North Korean representatives to the United Nations. Yet so far, the administration's stiff-arm strategy has sparked no regime change in Pyongyang. Instead, North Korea is better armed and more dangerous than ever it was before.

While the Bush administration has tended to equate engagement with appeasement, South Korea's government has erred in the opposite direction. Afraid that any overt criticism of the North could jeopardize the possibility of resuming negotiations, Seoul has become tight-lipped about their neighbor's human rights abuses and tried to intimidate activists into doing likewise.

After more than four decades of conservative, authoritarian governments, Seoul began to reconcile with the North in 1993 when voters chose a moderate, Kim Young Sam, to be the first elected civilian president of South Korea. In 1998, his successor, the former dissident Kim Dae Jung, set out to implement his "Sunshine Policy" of reconciliation through various exchanges and economic cooperation. Since his inauguration in 2003, President Roh Moo Hyun has further extended Kim Dae Jung's liberal legacy.

South Korea has moved leftward politically as its economy has grown dramatically, and the two trends have reinforced each other. The country has much more to lose from a conflict with the North than it once had. It has plenty of extra revenues to aid the North, and sees that aid as a way to ease the absorption of North Korea's backwards economy if and when the two countries reunify. Moreover, South Koreans believe that decades of aggressive containment produced only more tension with and terrorism from Pyongyang in the past, so why not try to deal with them?

Yet, as the pendulum has swung dramatically from right to left in South Korea, the government has gone from productive engagement to unabashed appeasement. Out of fear of provoking the highly volatile North Korean leadership, President Roh, ironically a former human rights and labor lawyer, has avoided all public criticisms of the North Korean government and its atrocious treatment of its people. Moreover, the government has done virtually nothing to try to bring back the 486 citizens kidnapped over the years by North Korea. For three consecutive years, Seoul has even abstained from voting on U.N. human rights resolutions criticizing North Korea, explaining that this might hinder progress toward talks on dismantling North Korea's nuclear program.

While South Korea's independent media run reports critical of the Pyongyang regime, the state-run KBS television networks virtually stopped showing inflammatory footage of North Korea from 2000. Defectors critical of the North have not been allowed on state-run television programs. While Seoul currently directs generous funding to groups that are trying to engage with the North through economic and cultural cooperation, it gives very little money to North Korean human rights groups.

Since about 2000, the South Korean government has also monitored and occasionally interfered with anti-North Korean human rights activists. For instance, last summer, Pastor Song Bu-Keun, a well-known South Korean human rights activist, was planning a trip to Athens, Greece, to protest against the Chinese and North Korean governments outside Olympic venues. Shortly before his scheduled departure, Song's colleague received a phone call from a South Korean official who asked whether the pastor really needed to go all the way to Greece to make his statement. Song went in spite of the government's opposition, but when in Athens, Song says, an operative of the Republic of Korea's powerful National Intelligence Service (NIS) kept tabs on his activities.

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In some cases, the government has done more than merely watch activists. In fall 2004, Norbert Vollertsen, a German doctor in South Korea who has been aggressively denouncing North Korea's human rights abuses, received a phone call from the German Embassy in Seoul. The Korean government wanted the embassy to relay the message that "he might, in the future, overstep the limits of tolerance," as the German Ambassador Michael Geier told South Korea's Yonhap News Agency. In 2003, South Korean riot police stopped human rights activists' attempt to send 600 radios by balloons to North Korea to spark dissent there.

In at least a few instances, the South Korean government has made it difficult for prominent critics of North Korea to obtain passports. Hwang Jang-Yop, the architect of North Korea's *juche* or self-reliance ideology, and his aide Kim Duk-Hong defected from the North to South Korea in 1997. The NIS denied Hwang a passport for years before finally cutting a deal: He was granted a passport, but he had to promise not to be critical of the North while in the United States. The less compromising Kim has still not been allowed to travel overseas. Seoul's reason for quieting the refugee's criticism of North Korea, according to Yoon Young-Kwan, a former South Korean foreign minister, is that "the Korean government is worried that if you go to the United States and you criticize North Korean continuously, this might have a negative impact on the six-party talk process."

South Korea has even buckled under North Korean criticism of its efforts to aid defectors. Last year, several hundred North Korean defectors came to South Korea via Vietnam after Seoul secretly sent two charter flights to airlift them out of Ho Chi Minh City. But when North Korea accused Seoul of kidnapping its citizens, South Korean officials publicly announced that no such further support for defectors would be permitted. In January, South Korea cut the settlement lump-sum money given to each North Korean refugee from $30,000 to $10,000 and is tightening up its defector screening process—a measure critics claim shows an intent to slow the flow of defectors. This, too, seems to be done in order to placate Pyongyang. North Korea has long worried that escapees could pose a danger to its *juche* system.

Tailored engagement

Seoul's actions may be craven, but they're not completely illogical. Washington's belligerent posture has repeatedly threatened to break the slender threads that tie the North Korean regime to the outside world. The South Koreans feel that they have to overcompensate by being extra nice.

But if South Korea's desire to appease North Korea is understandable, it is also unwise—just as the Bush administration's wish to have no direct relations with such an odious regime is understandable but unwise. There is a smarter strategy, and you don't have to go back to Reagan to find it.

The last time North Korea's nuclear weapons program had the world on edge was in 1993 and 1994. At that time, the Clinton administration vigorously pursued diplomatic negotiations but also warned Pyongyang that clear steps toward building nuclear weapons would be met with quick and severe repercussions. (Clinton had a contingency plan to bomb North Korea's nuclear reactors if negotiations failed.) Clinton allowed Jimmy Carter to serve as an "unofficial" envoy to diffuse tensions and jump-start negotiations by meeting personally with North Korea's then-Great Leader Kim Il Sung. The White House then consulted with South Korean President Kim Young Sam to ensure that the two democratic allies were working collaboratively to contain nuclear arms on the Korean peninsula. Although the diplomatic process was anything but smooth, the North Koreans responded rationally and signed an agreement under which their plutonium was put under international lock and key.

And there it stayed until the Bush administration received intelligence reports that the regime may have been trying to enrich uranium, a much slower route to creating nuclear weapons fuel than processing plutonium. When administration officials confronted Pyongyang about its uranium program in the fall of 2002, the totalitarian regime kicked out the international weapons inspectors, withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, and restarted its plutonium-based nuclear development program. Finally, in February 2005, North Korea officially announced that it possessed nuclear weapons.

If there is any hope of getting out of the current mess, it is for George W. Bush and Roh Moo Hyun to abandon their foolhardy strategies and meet somewhere in the middle. Bill Clinton and Kim Young Sam showed that it's both possible and productive to be tough with the North Koreans while still negotiating with them. Bush and Roh should do likewise. South Korea should neither suppress critics of North Korea nor apologize to the North when Seoul has done nothing wrong. If the North walks away from inter-Korea talks, let them walk away. Desperately poor, Pyongyang needs Seoul more than the other way around. While South Korea has told Kim Jong Il not to test a bomb, it should spell out that if he does, Seoul will stop all economic aid and other exchanges and will take matters to the United Nations for sanctions.

Bush, for his part, needs to match his concern about North Korean human rights with a plan for action. An opportunity arose in June when, after months of stalemate, Kim Jong Il indicated that he is ready to return to the table, provided the United States demonstrates serious interest in pursuing engagement. The administration should respond by dispatching a high-level emissary to Pyongyang to play the role of a Jimmy Carter in defusing tensions and jump-starting negotiations. But given the administration's history with North Korea, perhaps the world shouldn't hold its breath. ◆

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Roosevelt, Churchill, and ... Willkie?

Charles Peters on how a little-known utilities executive saved civilization.

By Paul Glastris

The big difference between Charles Peters, founding editor of this magazine, and those of us who came to work for him over the years is this: He believes in idealism while we *want* to believe in idealism.

Peters is part of the celebrated Greatest Generation that lived through the Depression, World War II, and the New Frontier—a time when the American political process called forth leaders who inspired the public to service and sacrifice. We, on the other hand, members of the generations that followed, came of age in very different times—Vietnam, Watergate, the Carter and Reagan years, the Clinton wars—when something like the opposite spirit has been ascendant. We look back on the character of that earlier era with admiration and some envy. We wish the country could be like that again. We know that the immense challenges America faces today—rising oil prices, the war in Iraq, the coming fiscal train wreck—will be very difficult to overcome if Americans and their political leaders cannot rise above their self-interest for the greater good. But little in our experience of American politics makes us think this will occur or even allows us to imagine how it might occur.

Five Days in Philadelphia: The Amazing "We Want Willkie!" Convention of 1940 and How It Freed FDR to Save the Western World
By Charles Peters
Public Affairs; $26.00

Thankfully, Peters has written a book that vividly recreates how, once, it did happen—the American electoral process, amidst bitter partisan divisions and backroom manipulation, produced a stunningly wise, beneficent, and forward-looking result. *Five Days in Philadelphia* is about the 1940 Republican convention. Peters brings this largely forgotten event delightfully to life with details plucked from archives, his own memory of the times, and a persuasive, How-the-Irish-Saved-Civilization-style argument that the convention was a pivotal moment in world history.

In Philadelphia that July, an isolationist and conservative GOP, desperate to deny Franklin Delano Roosevelt a third term, chose as its candidate a liberal internationalist, Wendell Willkie. And though Willkie did not in the end defeat FDR, he did something almost as consequential: He gave the president the crucial political running room he needed to ask the voters to make sacrifices in preparation for war. "If we can understand how and why people rose to their best," Peters writes, with characteristic clarity about the point he's trying to make, "then maybe we can make it happen again."

Conventional wisdom

It is hard to exaggerate how desperate the world situation was in the run-up to the convention. In April, Hitler's forces conquered Norway and Denmark. In May, they invaded Holland and Belgium. FDR knew that it was crucial for America to supply France and Great Britain with weaponry and to build up its own military forces. He

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also knew that time was running out. Yet over 80 percent of the public still opposed getting involved in the war. Congress had put severe restrictions on the president's ability to arm the allies. And going into the GOP convention, the party's top three presidential candidates, Arthur Vandenberg, Robert Taft, and Thomas E. Dewey, were all isolationists.

There were a few in the GOP who understood the gravity of the Nazi threat. Many were New York-establishment types—Wall Street bankers and media luminaries with business and personal connections in Europe. These individuals were looking for a candidate who shared their internationalist outlook, but whose biography and personality would appeal to the party's small-town base and to voters at large.

Their attention quickly focused on Wendell Willkie, an Indiana-born utilities industry executive who, though politically astute and involved, had never run for public office. Willkie lived in Manhattan, moved easily among the literati, and was in most respects a liberal; indeed, Peters's research shows that he did not switch his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican until 1939 or 1940. But he had broken with FDR over federal regulation of the power industry. He hailed from a small town in Indiana and still cut his hair "country style," like Will Rogers, with one lock falling onto his forehead. And by all accounts, he was tremendously impressive and likable. "He was a big, shambling, rumpled, overweight, carelessly dressed man," wrote one of his New York friends, Marcia Davenport, "and he radiated a stunning combination of intellect and homely warmth."

The brain trust that soon gathered around Willkie came up with a strategy for winning the nomination that any outsider candidate today would do well to study. Sam Pryor, a Republican national committeeman from Connecticut, wrested control over what was, in those days, one of the key resources to winning the nomination: tickets into the convention hall. Media mogul Henry Luce used his magazines to promote Willkie's candidacy shamelessly. New York *Herald Tribune* book editor Irita Van Doren, Willkie's mistress, helped the candidate hone his message. A young lawyer named Oren Root Jr. organized Willkie Clubs around the country—historic precursors to Howard Dean's Meetups.

Indeed, there was much about the maverick operation that sounds familiar to modern ears, from the way the campaign consciously marketed Willkie as a straight-talking nonpolitician to the candidate's skill at stroking the egos of an adoring press. The weekend before the convention, two bigfoot *New York Times* reporters, Arthur Krock and Turner Catledge, suggested to Willkie that his campaign needed a floor manager. What's that? Willkie asked. In fact, the candidate knew perfectly well, having himself been an assistant floor manager at a previous Republican convention. The feigned ignorance, Peters suggests, was probably intended to make the journalists feel that the candidate was taking their advice. (Apparently it worked; the headline of Krock's next column read "Willkie forces seek strategist.")

The convention itself was one of the last in which delegates actually chose the candidates before primary voters took over that job, and it was a rip-roaring one. Peters captures the sights and sounds of what it must have been like inside the packed Philadelphia Convention Hall—"a filthy, sweaty hell of sealed-in heat," as one attendee described it. He also provides wonderful color commentary on the often bare-knuckle tactics that each of the campaigns used to win votes. Much of the game involved impressing other delegates with the intensity of support for your candidate. Most of the delegates on the convention floor were conservative small-town folks who, though perhaps open to the logic of a Willkie candidacy, were not exactly enthusiastic about the liberal New York transplant, however hoosier his roots. Pryor solved that problem by using his control of convention tickets to pack the balconies with Willkie fans.

More than any convention in history, however, the outcome in 1940 was deeply affected by outside news events. On the eve of the convention, France fell to Germany. Movie newsreels showed French roads clogged with refugees and German troops parading through Paris. The news shocked the nation and the delegates. Though still fervently against going to war, enough delegates understood that Willkie was the only candidate who had seen the threat coming and would have the best shot at beating Roosevelt in November. On the fifth ballot, he won the nomination.

Peters devotes the latter half of the book to the crucial role Willkie played after the convention in helping FDR prepare the nation for war. Later that summer, Roosevelt was desperately trying to sell the public on the wisdom of trading 50 mothballed destroyers to Britain for West Indian naval bases. The War and Navy Departments worried that this would leave the United States itself dangerously exposed. Lawmakers and voters felt the same way. Willkie, through intermediaries, let the president know he would not attack him over the deal, a gesture, Peters argues, that gave FDR the courage to go through with it.

Even more consequential was a speech Willkie gave in August, against the advice of key aides, supporting a return of the military draft, which FDR was calling for. To stake out such a position in the midst of an election campaign before the nation was even at war (remember, Pearl Harbor was still 16 months away), it took considerable political courage. Though polls suggested that the majority of the country supported a draft, the minority that opposed it was far more intense. When the selective service bill passed in September, Sen. Hiram Johnson said that Willkie had "broken the back" of opposition to the draft.

Willkie's position probably cost him politically. In the closing weeks of the campaign, he turned more isolationist (in rhetoric if not in substance), bashing Roosevelt for secretly plotting to get the country into war, and cut Roosevelt's lead in half. Even after losing in November,

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Wendell Willkie meets the press.

Willkie made another vital contribution to the war effort. After touring war-torn London on FDR's behalf, Willkie testified before Congress in favor of the president's controversial Lend-Lease proposal to arm the allies, saying it was the "last, best chance" to keep America out of the war. With Willkie's support, Lend-Lease passed—over the opposition, it should be noted, of his campaign opponents, Sens. Taft and Vandenberg, who had also voted against the draft bill.

Our better angels

Willkie deserves recognition as a real American political hero. He was certainly seen as such by many of the brightest minds of his time. "Under any other leadership but his," wrote Walter Lippmann, "the Republican party in 1940 would have turned its back on Great Britain, causing all who resisted Hitler to feel abandoned." *Five Days in Philadelphia* ought to go a long way towards reviving Willkie's reputation.

But I hope the book resurrects something more. For those of us depressed by the corruption and mismanagement that the American political system has wrought lately, the book should provide hope that, under the right circumstances, that same system can turn things around.

One can question whether the circumstances *are* right today. Peters certainly takes pains to describe how different American culture was back then. Yet he also marvels at the role of chance and individual character. Had France not fallen just as the GOP convention was opening, or had Willkie followed other advice, history might have turned out quite differently.

The same, I think, can be said of our own time. Recall what the nation felt like immediately after 9/11. For a few brief months, we were more united than at any point in my lifetime. Had President Bush wanted to, he could have called for rescinding his tax cuts, a crash program of mandatory national service, and major reforms of NATO and the United Nations in the service of a united war on terror. The country and the world, I think, would have responded positively. It was his choice to take us in a different direction.

Or think about the last election. The candidate who most closely resembled Willkie was probably Wesley Clark. Had the former general and onetime Republican voter decided to jump into the presidential race a year earlier, chosen cleverer advisors, and not conceded Iowa, I think the probability is high that he would have won the nomination, and maybe the presidency.

Sure, these are what-ifs. But the point is, nothing is fated. In 1940, the American political process produced an almost miraculous result. Nothing says it can't do so again.

Paul Glastris is the editor in chief of *The Washington Monthly.*

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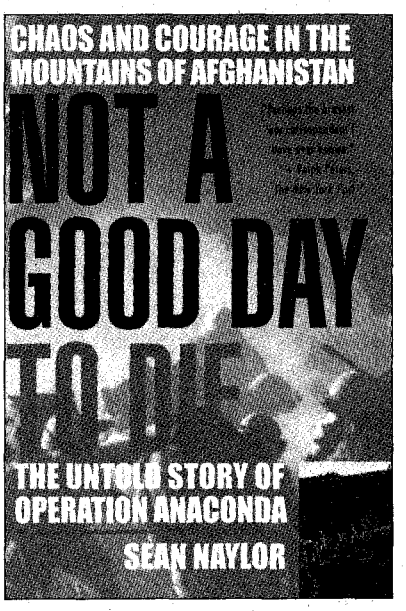
War by Video Conference

How al Qaeda fought us to a draw in the biggest battle in Afghanistan.

By Phillip Carter

The crew of the Chinook helicopter hovering above noticed the footprints in the snow as they prepared to land on Takur Ghar, a forbidding, 10,469-foot high peak overlooking the Shahikot Valley of eastern Afghanistan. It was just before 3:00 a.m. on March 4, 2002, and U.S. forces were launching Operation Anaconda to wipe out a contingent of Taliban and al Qaeda forces. An A.C.-130 gunship flying just ahead of them had seemed to confirm earlier intelligence that there was no significant enemy presence in the valley. But as the crew waited for the landing ramp to drop, an al Qaeda fighter fired his rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) into the Chinook, blowing out the electrical system and rendering the bird's navigational displays and radios useless. Shrapnel from a second RPG sliced through the aircraft, spraying hydraulic fluid all over the chopper floor. The Chinook had been on the ground for all of 45 seconds. Enemy soldiers were now visible to the naked eye, as was a donkey lashed to a tree and a goat or lamb carcass hanging from the branches.

Clearly, the intelligence had been wrong. As the helicopter began to lift, a 32-year-old Navy SEAL named Neil Roberts, perhaps unable to hear that the chopper was trying to take off, "made as if to jump." It isn't clear what happened next. A comrade made a frantic grab for Roberts in vain as he slid out of the aircraft onto the ground below.



Not A Good Day To Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda
By Sean Naylor
Berkley Hardcover; $25.95

After falling into the snow, Roberts was hit in the thigh, yet he continued to fight ferociously with his light machine gun. He was losing blood so rapidly that he couldn't resist as the enemy soldiers dragged him to their bunker. A little over an hour and a half after he had fallen from his chopper, Roberts was dead with a single gunshot to the head. The other SEALs on Roberts's chopper mounted a rescue attempt, only to find themselves trapped too by tenacious enemy fighters.

An Army Ranger quick-reaction force eventually reached the stranded SEALs, but they, too, were hit by ground fire on the way in. The temperature was in the 20s, and at nearly 10,500 feet, these fittest of men were exhausted. In spite of the conditions, the Americans prevailed, securing the hilltop long enough to bring in more helicopters to evacuate them. But victory came at a tremendous cost. Seven of America's most elite warriors—Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, and Air Force Para Jumpers—died on the mountain that day.

Although Operation Anaconda would become the largest infantry battle fought in Afghanistan, it has never received the kind of attention paid to the war in Iraq. Enter Sean Naylor's *Not a Good Day to Die*, a book based partly on his reporting as one of the first journalists "embedded" with U.S. military forces in Afghanistan. Naylor, an award-winning *Army Times* reporter, has pieced together an account of Operation Anaconda, including much that has previously been classified or known only to those who work in America's shadowy world of special operations. The book is dense with detail and an alphabet soup of military acronyms (non-military folks will find the upfront glossary helpful). But as a combat chronicle, the book holds its own. Men of valor and ineptitude come alive in its pages. There are moments both hilarious and heartbreaking, adding up to a good read. More than that, *Not a Good Day to Die* is a primer, if a 400-plus page book can be so described, for national security policy-makers interested in how not to fight a war.

Bad-plan-istan

Operation Anaconda began as an attempt to destroy what the U.S. military thought was a scattered group of about 250 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters in and around the Shahikot Valley, 81 miles south of Kabul. A number of those fighters were thought to be high-value targets—many suspected Osama bin Laden might be among them. Having just failed to block the escape of al

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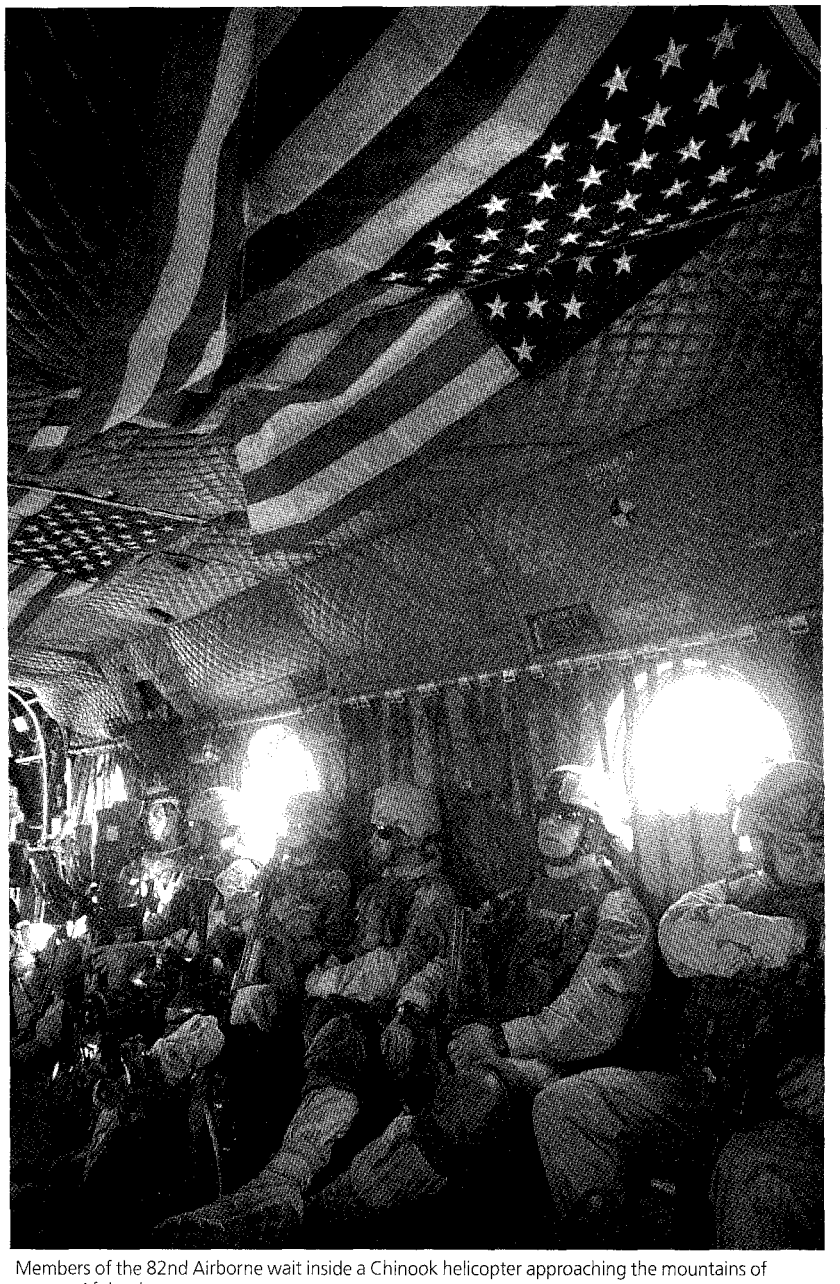
Qaeda forces (and possibly bin Laden) from Tora Bora, the military was determined not to make the same mistake again. And yet it did. Instead of a couple hundred jihadists, the Shahikot Valley region turned out to hold a few thousand. And though the military would declare Operation Anaconda a "victory," Army War College professor Stephen Biddle has written that it may have actually been a victory for al Qaeda and the Taliban, in that it showed they could stand up to a conventional U.S. force on the battlefield, much as they did to the Soviets two decades before.

Naylor is a reporter and storyteller who refrains from drawing hard conclusions about why Anaconda played out the way it did. But he provides ample evidence from which to understand the sources of the failure. And they are depressingly familiar. Bureaucratic turf wars, poor intelligence-gathering, an over-reliance on technology, a deeply flawed command structure, a shallow understanding of the history and character of the Afghans, and a strategic doctrine that limited the available number of troops all contributed to the debacle.

Not wishing to be seen as an imperial power like the Soviet Union, the Department of Defense was anxious to leave a "small footprint" in Afghanistan. Early reports indicated there would be no large fight in the Shahikot Valley. Indeed, U.S. military leaders, including Gen. Tommy Franks, felt the war was largely over by February 2002, and that all that was left were a few "mopping-up" operations. Consequently, Central Command sharply limited the number and kind of troops that were to come to Afghanistan and also turned down ground commanders' requests for more helicopters, supporting artillery, and infantrymen. Fewer boots on the ground was also part of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's strategy of reforming the military—a strategy that didn't carry the day in Afghanistan, and that has failed spectacularly in Iraq.

Furthermore, the administration had its eye on Iraq—senior military officials were starting to lay the diplomatic groundwork for the war there as early as February 2002, clearly hoping that in Afghanistan a combination of technological superiority and Afghan proxies fighting for the United States would deliver success on the cheap.



Members of the 82nd Airborne wait inside a Chinook helicopter approaching the mountains of eastern Afghanistan.

Getty Images

In the weeks leading up to Anaconda, intelligence officers thought they had learned everything they could about the Shahikot Valley from satellite and other aerial surveillance. But disturbing rumors persisted that there might be more. One source picked up by the military said that the enemy was not in the valley but actually, Naylor writes, "living up on the ridgelines and coming into the villages to get supplies." Satellite photography caught one RPG, which, warned one officer, probably meant there were more, but no one knew just how many. A thousand enemy fighters were estimated to be in the valley. As it turned out, there may have been 10 times as many, and they weren't just in the valley but on the tactically crucial high ground above.

But U.S. commanders refused to change their plan. It was, according to the 10th Mountain Division's chief of operations Lt. Col. David Gray, "unreasonable to expect wholesale changes based on a single source." But, writes Naylor, "[chief planner Maj. Paul Wilie] acknowledged that writing the plan had been such a painful process of compromise and negotiation that nobody could

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face the prospect of tearing it up... simply because the enemy might not be where they were supposed to be."

Perhaps the biggest problem was the Rube Goldberg command structure created by Gen. Franks. The war was run from Tampa, Fla., 7,000 miles and 10 time zones away by video teleconferencing. Decisions were made by committee and on Eastern Standard Time, often with an eye towards how the decisions would be briefed to the press at the Pentagon. Naylor quotes a deputy commanding general's priceless description of the SecDef's daily press briefing:

"When SecDef started having a [press] briefing every day, it meant that for hours of that day you could not talk to the CENTCOM staff.... For hours of the day you were unable to get to a senior person to make a decision at CENTCOM because they were tied up prepping themselves for the SecDef's briefing. The SecDef called CENTCOM every morning. They had a morning telephone call and I believe they had an afternoon telephone call. And, for a couple of hours before that telephone call, you could not get [Gen. Franks's directors of operations or intelligence] and therefore you couldn't get a decision.... Numbers became so important that if the SecDef went to a briefing and we had reported that we had captured 14 Al Qaeda and it really turned out to be 12 or 16, then it would be easier to let two go or go back and capture two more rather than to try to change the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] number."

At least some of the failures might have been averted had Franks and his team tapped the right field commander. Naylor clearly thinks that choice should have been someone like Delta Force Lt. Col. Pete Blaber, whose elite teams reconnoitering the area provided the first hints that enemy forces might be larger than estimated. Instead, the Pentagon chose Air Force Brig. Gen. Gregory Trebon, who had never before commanded a ground operation, with Navy Lt. Cmdr. Vic Hyder as his deputy. Though the military has worked hard at what it calls "jointness," trying to get services working in tandem with one another, there was not much evidence of it under Trebon and Hyder. Hyder went so far as to communicate with his subordinates using a radio frequency he knew Blaber would not be monitoring. Trebon and Hyder were convinced that satellite feeds from Predator drones delivered to Navy and Air Force bases hundreds of miles away would be sufficient to run things. "The battle would," in Naylor's withering words, "be 'controlled' by officers watching video screens on a desert island and 'commanded' by a man who had made his name flying transport aircraft."

Two years after Anaconda, military analysts are still debating why those choppers on Takur Ghar never got close air support, and whether the Air Force provided enough firepower for the conventional infantry that followed the commandos. The Air Force, according to Army Special Forces troops, had promised to "soften" enemy targets with a 55-minute aerial bombardment while Air Force officers at Bagram Air Force base say they were aware of no such plans. Having left their artillery at home, the Army's conventional infantry depended on aircraft for heavy firepower. As often happens in combat, the best-laid plans went awry, leaving hundreds of infantrymen to fight with only the weapons they had carried in on their backs.

Al Qaeda, of course, fought with no such bureaucratic limits on their organization; intelligence moved among the enemy as fast as a cell phone call. Having seized the high ground, al Qaeda fighters were able to rain mortar rounds and rifle fire down on the Army's conventional infantry virtually at will, subject to occasional harassment from the limited number of aircraft that made it into the fight.

Naylor is almost despairing of the American military's wholesale dependence on high-tech warfare and its de-emphasis on troop numbers and the human factor. High-tech solutions are appropriate in certain cases; unmanned aerial vehicles provide excellent general reconnaissance capability, especially for places too dangerous or too remote to be reached by ground troops. But there are limits to these solutions, as evidenced by their failure to properly assess the al Qaeda presence in the Shahikot Valley. Nor were they able to find bin Laden and Mullah Omar in the caves of Tora Bora. Right now, the Army and Marines have only a few active infantry units in Afghanistan, and, by all indications, more are needed in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

American special-operations forces have been critical to any U.S. successes in Afghanistan. Three teams with fewer than 20 commandos contributed more to Operation Anaconda than did three entire battalions of conventional infantry—nearly 1,500 soldiers—reports Naylor. He points out those commandos are ideal soldiers for the new, smaller wars we are likely to fight in the future, particularly against irregulars and guerrilla forces. Unfortunately, these elite forces have been stretched to their breaking point by back-to-back wars in Central and Southwest Asia. As with any precious resource, they should be husbanded with care.

U.S. commanders claimed victory after Operation Anaconda ended. However, this book makes it clear that such a victory—if it can be called that—owes not to the planning or leadership of the generals, but to the extraordinary ability of U.S. soldiers to adapt under fire. Naylor writes admiringly of the mettle shown by American soldiers: "It was a sergeant's fight, all right, and the sergeants were giving it everything they had. Their soldiers didn't let them down. Pinned down and surrounded by an enemy that outnumbered and outgunned them, and who were fighting with a ferocity that no one had predicted, the young infantrymen responded to the chaos and confusion with a courage that surprised even their NCOs." Thanks in part to Naylor's on-the-spot reporting, these soldiers' exploits will not be forgotten. But it is not enough to simply praise the troops for their courage under fire. We owe it to them, and to the generations that will succeed them, to take the lessons from the Afghan battlefield to the next fight.

Phillip Carter is an attorney and Army reserve officer recently mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom who writes on national security issues for *The Washington Monthly*.

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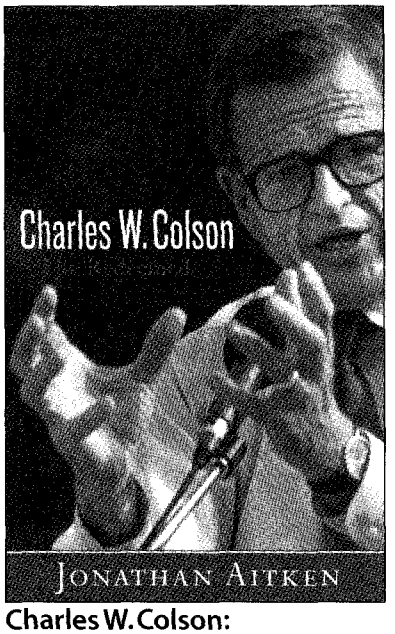
Born Again, Again

A new biography of Charles Colson is yet another cover-up.

By Max Blumenthal

In March, 1972, the disclosure of a memo written by Dita Beard, a lobbyist from the telecommunications firm ITT, set in motion the events that would lead Mark Felt to become the source known as Deep Throat. The Beard memo revealed that a $400,000 donation to President Richard Nixon's reelection campaign had prompted the Justice Department to scrap an antitrust suit against the company. In an effort to erase this inconvenient truth, White House special counsel Charles Colson ordered the FBI to declare the memo a forgery. Unfortunately for Colson, the veteran FBI agent assigned to the task was Felt who, after reviewing lab results, refused to issue Colson's desired conclusion. An enraged Colson berated Felt on the telephone, subjecting him to "partisan instructions and pressure," according to Felt's memoirs. The incident taught Felt that the Nixon White House would stop at little in the name of politics. It wasn't long before he was looking for a red flag in the flower pot on Bob Woodward's balcony.

This Charles Colson, the one whose name is commonly preceded by "hatchet man," is a thing of the past, according to Colson's friends, supporters, and now his biographer, Jonathan Aitken. Perhaps the most famous born-again Republican after George W. Bush, Colson has spent the three decades since



Charles W. Colson: A Life Redeemed
By Jonathan Aitken
WaterBrook Press; $24.95

Watergate working with Prison Fellowship, a penal reform organization he founded, and burnishing his credentials as an evangelical leader. He has become, in the words of Peggy Noonan, one of the "heroes of Watergate." Indeed, Noonan wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* just days after the disclosure of Felt's identity as Deep Throat that Colson "has devoted his life to helping prisoners and their families. He paid the price, told the truth, blamed no one but himself, and turned his shame into something helpful."

And as if on cue, along comes an authorized biography, *Charles W. Colson: A Life Redeemed*. The former Watergate felon tapped Aitken to write this account of his metamorphosis from White House hack to man of God, and it is an inspired choice. Aitken himself is a disgraced former Tory cabinet minister who went to prison in 1999 for perjury in a bungled libel suit against *The Guardian*, which had run a series of articles detailing his illicit dealings with Saudi arms traders. He met Colson in the course of writing a glowing biography of Nixon, and Colson ministered to Aitken during his seven-month prison term. Under Colson's influence, Aitken became, as they say in Britain, a "Christer" and a board member of Colson's Prison Fellowship International.

Just before he launches into a description of Colson as "America's best-known Christian leader after Billy Graham," Aitken assures readers that his book "is not religious, political, or personal hagiography." But it's hard to know what else to call a book that hyperbolizes up an impressive enough conversion tale, selectively presents key characters, omits inopportune facts, and glosses over the subject's more politically incorrect views. The Charles Colson who appears in Aitken's narrative is a stock character, a humble and forgiving man who is too busy helping prisoners to be embroiled in the hot-button issues of the day. The evidence to the contrary makes it impossible to dismiss this adoring portrait as merely neglectful. Something else is going on. In *Charles W. Colson*, Aitken and Colson—the two veteran con-men—have conspired to commit yet another cover-up.

Come to Jesus

No conversion story can be told without first recounting the wretched deeds and failings of the fallen sinner. With Colson, it's a rich lode. There was the time in 1972, for example, when Colson arranged for a Gary Hart impersonator to place a rude phone call to former AFL-CIO chief George Meany (Hart was then George McGovern's campaign manager), resulting in the union's refusal to endorse the Democ-

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ratic nominee. Then there's the story of how Colson diverted $8,000 of Nixon campaign funds to purchase copies of a book that purported to document the "anti-Nixon bias" of the television networks during the 1968 campaign. (Through these bulk sales, the book made *The New York Times*' bestseller list.) And who can forget the tale of how Colson masterminded the break-in of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, a crime which would eventually land him in prison?

After the sins must come the change of heart. Colson's come-to-Jesus moment occurred with the Watergate trial at its height. In the summer of 1973, with the prosecution preparing its case against him and the press corps circling like sharks, Colson knelt on the floor of the office of Raytheon CEO Tom Phillips. While Colson fought back tears in an embarrassed state of silence, Phillips prayed for him and for his soul. As he drove home, "tears of relief" finally burst from his eyes and, Colson tells Aitken, he felt the spirit of Christ for the first time. Colson was eventually convicted for his part in the Ellsberg break-in; during his seven months in prison, he studied the Bible obsessively.

Upon his release, Colson founded Prison Fellowship, now a multimillion-dollar international organization and the largest prison ministry in the world. With the help of nearly 50,000 volunteers, Prison Fellowship runs Bible studies for more than 150,000 prisoners and matches up 21,000 of them with penpals. Its Angel Tree program sends inmates' children to summer camp and provides them with Christmas gifts. Over the years, Colson has logged countless hours ministering to prisoners, sometimes praying with forgotten inmates in dank solitary-confinement chambers. Some studies suggest Colson's methods reduce recidivism rates. And the former combative partisan has been a peacemaker as well, quelling the occasional prison riot and playing host to former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver and ex-Ku Klux Klan bomb-maker Tommy Tarrants at a prayer dinner.

If that were the extent of Colson's tale, it would indeed be remarkable. But Aitken does not tell the whole story. The Colson he portrays emerges from prison nearly apolitical, struggling only "to understand what exactly God was calling him to do." In his search for answers, Colson sought guidance from emerging leaders in the insular evangelical subculture, men like Doug Coe, Francis Schaeffer, and "Jim" Dobson. Their names are dropped into Colson's story without any background information, suggesting not the slightest hint that Colson had integrated himself into an incipient political movement now known as the Christian right.

These men are not your normal man's Bible study partners. Aitken notes that it was Coe who first introduced Colson to evangelical culture through a group with the friendly name of Fellowship House. But he neglects to mention that Fellowship House is a front for "The Family," a highly secretive, all-male cadre of largely right-wing congressmen, industry chieftains, and members of the military. Jeffrey Sharlet, a journalist who infiltrated The Family for *Harper's* magazine, has described the goal of The Family to be "an 'invisible' world organization led by Christ." Similarly, while Aitken writes about the influence of theologian Francis Schaeffer on Colson, he fails to explain that Schaeffer was the chief proponent of a theology known as "Dominionism," which commands Christians to put the United States under the control of biblical law, not the Constitution.

Perhaps the most egregious of Aitken's omissions involves James Dobson, who appears simply as a nice man who helped Colson get his broadcast career off the ground. Absent is any mention of the evangelical power broker who spoke alongside Colson during the summer of 2004 at a series of stadium rallies against gay marriage and John Kerry. Missing as well is the leader who helped organize last April's Justice Sunday, a national broadcast in support of President Bush's stalled judicial nominees. At the height of the event, Dobson lashed out at the *Roe v. Wade* decision, comparing it to the Nazi genocide of Jews: "That has now resulted in 44 million deaths, the biggest holocaust in world history, that came out of the Supreme Court."

It might not be worth mentioning the political and religious agendas of these men if the born-again Colson dedicated his life purely to hands-on ministry and stayed above politics. However, while you would not know it from reading Aitken's treatment, Colson is still mired in the thick of conservative politics.

It wouldn't have been difficult for Aitken to find examples of Colson sharing his strongly held—and often quite extreme—political views. In a recent *Beliefnet* commentary, Colson suggested that homosexuals are "lower than the animal species." The week before Justice Sunday, Colson declared on his Breakpoint radio commentary (carried to millions of listeners by Christian broadcasting networks) that "Christians have a right—indeed a duty—to call their senators and tell them that what is going on is outrageous." And perhaps most disturbingly, during a 1994 radio commentary on the killing of David Gunn, an abortion doctor, by Michael Griffin of Operation Rescue, Colson remarked: "It is a sad day indeed when our national leaders can't tell the difference between a martyr and a murderer."

Some of Colson's controversial political positions are even directly related to his work with Prison Fellowship. In a 1997 essay for *Christianity Today*, Colson argued in favor of "zero tolerance for any violation of public order," advocating draconian punishment for crimes like loitering. Yet only in passing does Aitken mention that Colson has pressured state legislatures to pass "zero-tolerance" laws, and he doesn't explain what those are or why Colson favors them. Similarly, Aitken's portrayal of Colson visiting Mississippi's death row in 2001 "to bring a message of faith, hope, and love to inmates" avoids discussion of Colson's ardent support for the death penalty.

Finally, Aitken makes only brief mention of Colson's work as an informal advisor to Karl Rove on evangelical issues: "Colson was having a considerable influence in a wholly Christian direction on several of the policies of President George W. Bush." And while he notes that Prison Fellowship has received federal grants through Bush's new faith-based initiative, nowhere does

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Aitken report precisely how much federal money Colson has received in subsidies from the current administration.

Colson's makeover is not without precedent. The next generation of evangelical conservatives has studiously promoted their interest in issues traditionally associated with liberals and whitewashed their less palatable stances as they begin to take the movement's reins. Ted Haggard, the fresh-faced director of the National Association of Evangelicals, barnstorms around the country stressing the need for "creation care" of the environment. Rick Warren, the new golden boy who has been written up in *New York Times* columns and *New Yorker* profiles, is eager to talk about everything except homosexuality and abortion. Even Pat Robertson has gotten into the act, appearing alongside social liberals like Bono and Ellen DeGeneres in a campaign to stop global poverty. The new evangelical considers it gauche to answer questions about "judicial tyranny," the "homosexual agenda," or the New World Order. They're focused on poverty and the environment, don't you know?

Inspired by the Christian right's campaign to mainstream itself, Aitken's book is an impressive piece of public relations. Aitken uses the tale of repentance and redemption to render Colson beyond reproach, describing his subject as no more than "the gentle, forgiveness-seeking Colson." Yet he is ultimately stymied in this effort by Colson himself. Upon the disclosure that Mark Felt was Deep Throat, Colson instantly reverted to old form. "When any president has to worry whether the deputy director of the FBI is sneaking around in dark corridors peddling information in the middle of the night, he's in trouble," Colson told *The Washington Post*. He later complained to CNN that Felt's leaks to Woodward were "demeaning" and "terribly disappointing." The more accurate story of Colson is less a life redeemed than a life reframed. Colson no longer attacks individuals in the service of Nixon; he attacks them in the name of God.

Max Blumenthal is a regular contributor to *The Nation* and a research fellow at Media Matters for America.

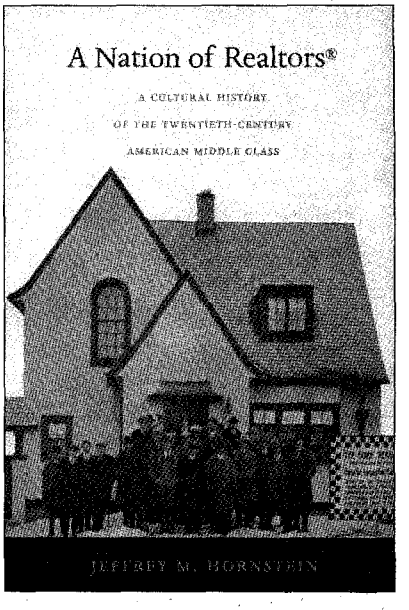
House Proud

How the real estate industry got respectable.

By Clay Risen

In 1922, Sinclair Lewis published *Babbitt*, his classic satire of the emerging American mass middle class. Readers remember its title character, George Babbitt, for his comfortable angst, his paradoxical mixture of class pride and implacable spiritual unease, and his sense of accomplishment tossed with a constant concern for status. But many readers may not recall Babbitt's chosen career: He is a realtor. And though some aspects of the book have not worn well—today's reader, well-versed in the ironies of American middle-class life, will likely find its depiction of Babbitt and his socioeconomic environs wooden and unconvincing—Lewis could not have chosen a better career to embody 1920s middle-class anxiety. Realty was just then emerging as a middle-class profession, and, like Babbitt, it was nervously obsessed with positioning itself as a socially respectable pursuit grounded in empirical research, a profession akin to law or medicine. "Makes me tired the way these doctors and profs and preachers put on the lugs about being 'professional men,'" Babbitt says. "A good realtor has to have more knowledge and finesse than any of 'em."

Looking back, we can see that Babbitt and his colleagues needn't have worried—realty rode the American middle class to dominance in the decades before and after World War II, becoming one of the most lucrative sectors of the U.S. economy within a few decades. At the same time, its rise came just as the federal government was taking on new powers and responsibilities between the wars, and it was one of the first industries to realize the importance of maintaining a robust



A Nation of Realtors: A Cultural History of the Twentieth Century American Middle Class

By Jeffrey M. Hornstein

Duke University Press; $22.95

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Washington office—a presence that allowed realtors to shape the modern housing market. "Organized real estate brokers structured the rules of the real estate market to create a demand for their services, positioning themselves as the principal purveyors of what came to be the quintessential symbol of middle-class status," writes Jeffrey Hornstein in his survey of realty in the 20th century, *A Nation of Realtors®*.

But the parallel history of realty and the middle class does not mean that the interests of the two have always intersected. Indeed, as the industry's status anxieties subsided and its profit motive, a central but previously suppressed driving force, came to the fore after World War II, those interests began to diverge. Realty took a powerful stand against public housing initiatives in favor of suburban tract homes, just as it pressed for tax policies that privileged home ownership over renting, thus promoting the single-family suburban sprawl over dense city living and closing off middle-class ascension to millions of working families. And it has used the immense lobbying power of its trade association to lock in a system of buying and selling homes that centralizes power in the hands of the realtor while hampering the efficiencies inherent in greater consumer choice and technological change. What was once the gateway to greater home ownership has become an obstacle.

It is one of Washington's many ironies that its second-largest lobbying organization—which last election cycle distributed nearly $4 million in campaign funds—got its start as a model of progressive social reorganization. The brokering of property is an age-old career, and until relatively recently, not a well-respected one. In 19th century popular culture, the broker was an archetypal bad guy, an amoral swindler, a "curbstoner." But in 1908, a few dozen representatives from local real estate groups got together in Chicago to form the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges, soon renamed the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) and the precursor of today's National Association of Realtors (NAR). At the time, the word "realtor" didn't exist; in just one example of its efforts to establish a new, respectable profession, NAREB adopted the neologism in 1916 to distinguish its members from run-of-the-mill brokers. "We ought to insist that folks call us 'realtors' and not 'real-estate men,'" Babbitt tells a fellow broker. "Sounds more like a reg'lar profession."

In fact, the history of NAREB/NAR is a long list of such efforts to create, almost from scratch, a profession, complete with a scientific discourse, university-level curriculum, and standardized business practices. The goal, according to the editors of the *National Real Estate Journal*, was to place realty in the same intellectual category as medicine and law, in which the profession's members have unique access to a body of knowledge which they then sell, along with their informed judgment, to consumers. "Any man who wants to know anything about medicine must go to a physician," they wrote in 1910. "If he wants to know anything about real estate or land he must go to a real estate man."

In 1918, NAREB ratified a model licensing law to be adopted by state organizations; by 1950, licensing had been accepted nationwide. In 1923, a joint NAR-led committee approved a textbook series and two-year curriculum; by 1925, people were talking about the need for university-level instruction in "realology," a discussion that presupposed an objective body of knowledge and imagined a future for realtors as the arbiters of American land policy. They found a ready ally in Richard Ely, a renowned expert in land economics at the University of Wisconsin, who soon took the lead in creating a national curriculum for real estate education. With the economy booming and a land bubble growing in Florida, the decade between the end of World War I and the Great Crash proved seminal in the transformation of real estate from avocation to profession and of NAREB from "an ineffectual and unfocused men's club into a distinctive, effective modern hybrid of a trade association and professional association."

But as with so much in American society, the Great Depression proved the undoing of realty's progressive optimism. The idea that realtors could remove the random, speculative aspects of the field through a grounding in science was devastated by the bursting of the Florida bubble in 1926 that preceded the stock market crash, and the sector was further devastated by the drop in housing starts in the early 1930s. But a drop in people's ability to buy homes does not mean that people do not actually need homes, and under the New Deal the federal government stepped in to fill the gap.

Realtors had maintained a Washington presence since 1917. In 1920, they had established a "Division of Information" to influence policy-making. Interestingly, many in the organization opposed the idea of a lobbying arm, and even the head of the Washington office at one point urged it be shut down because "I do not think this Association will gain friends or make progress by maintaining the bureau in Washington." Nevertheless, the Washington bureau grew, and political ties between NAREB and the proliferating arms of the federal government involved with everything from land policy to banking expanded apace. "Thus by the beginning of the 1930s," Hornstein writes, "the Realtors were well positioned in Washington, poised to take advantage of the crisis brought on by the deepening Depression. The logic of their professional project had almost inexorably interjected their ideas and personnel into the policy-making process."

So, it was natural when the feder-

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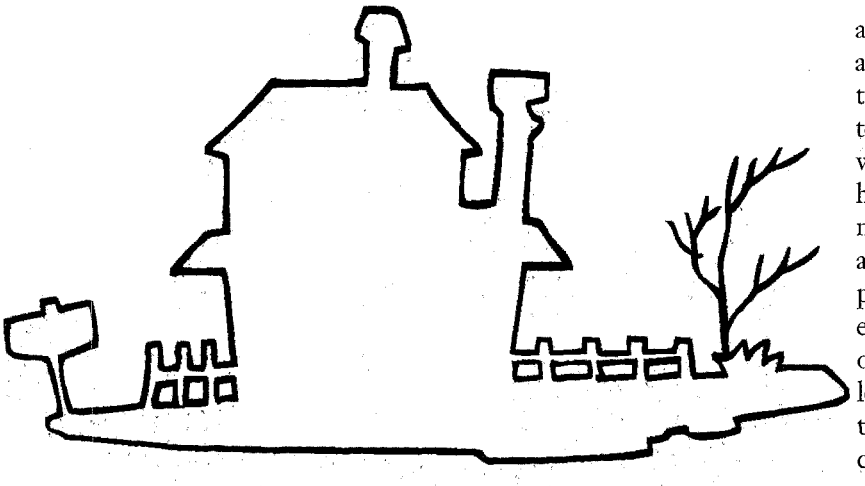

al government took up the issue of public housing that it turned to NAREB and its members to provide staffing and expertise. Indeed, the centerpiece legislation of New Deal housing policy, the 1934 National Housing Act, drew inspiration primarily from a set of principles outlined in the 1920s by then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and NAREB, which gave primacy to single-family, detached homes through mortgage insurance and standardized building practices.

Ironically, what should have been a crisis for realty—the collapse of the market—turned out to be a watershed opportunity. As the demand for cheap housing grew, policymakers considered a variety of alternatives, including directly funded public housing and public/private partnerships. But thanks to their lobbying power, realtors were able to ensure primacy for the private sector; as they filled the ranks of the newly established Federal Housing Authority, they shaped an agenda that privileged new construction over rehabilitation and suburban, detached dwellings over multi-unit urban ones, "effectively," in Hornstein's words, "abolish[ing] a wide range of housing and neighborhood forms, thereby over-determining the monotonous post-Depression landscape of the American suburbs." After the war, that influence only grew, as decommissioned soldiers returned home to start families—in newly minted suburbs created by commodious federal and state tax and mortgage programs, which had been themselves shaped largely by NAREB.

Hornstein, unfortunately, loses track of the NAREB/NAR story after the war, dedicating the book's final two chapters—and the bulk of his discussion of post-war realty—to the rise of women realtors. This is, of course, a very important story, so much so that it deserves its own book. Meanwhile, outside of the (admittedly dramatic) changes in realty's gender makeup, the reader learns little about how the sector and its trade association have fared since the 1950s. What makes that period so striking, though, is that there's not much to tell. Housing prices have risen steadily, while the suburbs have expanded at a dizzying pace. And, thanks to NAREB (which changed its name to NAR in 1974), the role of the realtor within those trends has remained the same. Through its $4 million-a-cycle moneybag, it has largely managed to stave off any further federal involvement in its industry, a remarkable occurrence when one considers Washington's efforts in such related industries like insurance and securities.

Political influence is one thing; market control is another. In most markets, producers vie for control, and ideally their competition keeps prices down and gives consumers a variety of choices. But real estate is an odd beast. Realtors are not producers (i.e., they do not, in the main, buy or sell homes); they merely advise clients. They are intermediaries. So how can they make sure that their carefully constructed system remains dominant? The key lies with information. During the first half of the century, an ingenious method of sharing information among realtors emerged, the multiple-listing system (MLS), in which every realtor could see information on every other realtor's houses. Each local real estate board now maintains its own MLS through member contributions. And while over the years the MLS model has gone from a card file to an online database, it has remained fundamentally unchanged since the end of World War II—for good reason. Even with the advent of the Internet, consumer access to the MLS is very difficult without the cooperation of a realtor, making it a control point for the national organization and an ongoing rationale for the standard realty model.

The MLS allows control not only over consumers—who, with little other choice, cough up six percent of a home's selling price as commission—but over realtors as well. In recent years several web-based models for buying and selling homes have emerged, many of which disaggregate the broker's responsibilities, passing many onto the consumer and as a result offering much lower prices than the traditional model. In response, the NAR and state-level real-estate commissions (the public entities which are in turn tightly controlled by state real-estate boards) have passed or are considering a raft of policies that would allow individual realtors to blackball these startups by denying them access to their MLS listings. That this ultimately hurts the consumer, who sees fewer homes and therefore has less than perfect information, as much as it hurts these fledgling firms is proof of how far the industry has come from its progressive-era founding—and how far it has deviated.

Clay Risen is an assistant editor at *The New Republic*.

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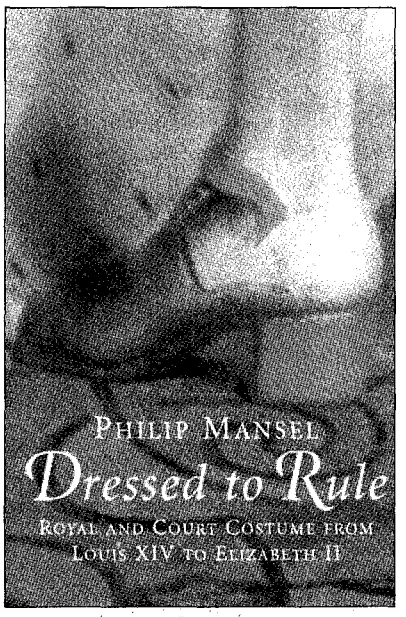
When Real Men Wore Heels

How the demands of empires have shaped the history of fashion.

By Christina Larson

This summer, Japanese businessmen have been asked to disrobe. With an eye on the Kyoto Protocol, the government is requiring business owners to keep thermostats set at a toasty 82 degrees Fahrenheit and cajoling salarymen to shed their jackets and ties. It's a hard sell in a country where, as one apparel retailer explained to *The New York Times*, it's long been assumed that "the man who is wearing a suit is a businessman and the man who's not is unemployed." That's why the government has coaxed cartoonists to draw CEOs in short sleeves, mounted extravagant fashion shows, and recruited the iconic chairman of Toyota, Hiroshi Okuda, to prowl the runways jacketless, hoping that eco-friendly fashion will trickle down.

In Washington, however, doors still swing open for pinstripe suits. Though much of the corporate world has gladly left cufflinks and wingtips in the closet, Senate suites and federal agencies remain sanctuaries for starched shirts. On Pennsylvania Avenue, formality starts at the top. If the commander in chief doesn't wear a suit he seems, to voters, less than presidential, incongruous with the lavish decor of the Oval Office. (Jimmy Carter bucked tradition, but his cardigans inspired giggles, not imitation.) With the gold standard set in the White House, all members of the president's court—cabinet officials, senators, policy advisors, and lobbyists seeking his attention—feel compelled to match the shine on his shoes.



Dressed To Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II
By Philip Mansel
Yale University Press, $35.00

Fashions change, but wardrobe's power to signal rank and membership endures. In *Dressed to Rule*, a book that would appeal to Machiavelli and Martha Stewart alike, Philip Mansel retells modern history with an emphasis on how political leaders have used dress to impress and transgress. Editor of *The Court Historian* journal, Mansel gleans details from coronation portraits, family albums, travel diaries, and newsreels to show how rebels and kings have wielded highland kilts, high heels, and headscarves as shorthand for identity and ideology. Strategic displays of fabric and flesh often denote not only who's in command, but whether the claim to reign is staked on birth, might, or wit. An historian by training, Mansel is careful in his assertions, and his book is not crafted in service of a central argument. Yet, he implicitly builds the case that no political upheaval has ever occurred without an accompanying revolution in dress.

Once the alpha male of the Western world, Louis XIV shrouded himself in resplendent satin coats with gold embroidery and lace sleeves, silk stockings and full-bottomed wigs—which Mansel suggests showcased the Sun King's divinely-ordained right to rule France. At a time when most mortals wore course shirts of flax and wool, the king brandished strategic splendor as later rulers would display military might. He also invited his courtiers to watch him dress. Robing the king was an elaborate 90-minute ritual each morning, with attendants crowding the antechambers awaiting their turn to enter: Only the highest officials of state were admitted while he was shaving; bishops, marshals, and provincial governors could enter later. Visiting dignitaries were sometimes awarded the privilege of handing the king his shirt. The ritual afforded the French court a close look at the king's new clothes—significant because nobles affirmed their allegiance by imitating the king—and kept business flowing to the nation's silk looms and lace factories. The dress industry then employed a third of wage-earners in France (many of the lace factories were founded by finance minister Colbert), and if members of the Third Estate were busy stitching sleeves, they had less time to plot rebellion.

Admission to court functions and access to his majesty's counsel was assured by proper attire: Male courtiers were required to don silk or velvet coats encrusted with jewels and embroidery, while women squeezed into corseted dresses with puffy sleeves and long

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trains. Ordinances prohibited untitled aspirants from donning such finery. One emblematic accessory, which Louis turned into a must-have item among both ladies and gents at court, was a pair of red high heels, or *talons rouges*. The fashion, as Mansel explains, advertised a lifestyle of leisure, "demonstrat[ing] that nobles did not dirty their shoes." Seventeenth-century aristocrats, after all, believed they were born into privilege and didn't need to saunter far or break a sweat to earn their keep.

Soon discerning rulers across Europe coveted *talons rouges*. With outthrust calves and pointed toes, contemporary monarchs in Britain, Austria, Saxony, and elsewhere flaunted scarlet heels in coronation portraits. French fashion marched farther than French armies, as dolls dressed in the latest styles from Versailles were prized as far as Constantinople and St. Petersburg, and, Mansel notes, even in capitals distinctly hostile to the Bourbon throne, including London and Vienna.

But as the novels and essays of Voltaire and Montesquieu wound along the same trade routes, Enlightenment thought pricked Europeans to question aristocratic entitlement and kingship based upon divine right. In Eastern Europe, military monarchs began to fortify their armies, articulate new justifications for kingship, and restock their closets. Frederick II of Prussia, who saw the army as central to national greatness and prided himself on the martial virtues of strength, stamina, and public service (he spoke of himself as "the first servant of my state"), paraded in military uniform to state dinners and diplomatic functions, the more battle-worn, the better. "The more victories he won," Mansel notes, "the shabbier his uniforms became. Some were stained with snuff, torn, darned and patched at the elbows. He wanted to look as he appeared on the battlefield." Showing off his dirty boots had become a way to flaunt work ethic and war prowess.

On the day she seized power in a coup, Catherine the Great of Russia donned the uniform of the palace guard to enlist their help overthrowing her husband. To commemorate her special day, she commissioned a portrait of herself on horseback in the regiment's green and gold uniform, wearing boots and brandishing a sword. When she later hosted state dinners for soldiers, she often descended the staircase in her "regimental gown"—a singular hybrid with a military jacket-like top, glittering insignia on the lapels, and a billowing skirt. By 1790, court dress in Russia and Prussia resembled that of army battalions more than of ballrooms, as martial attire was practically *de rigueur* and well-dressed gentlemen wore swords.

As the industrial revolution helped jumpstart the rise of the British empire, British regiments and diplomats marched new fashions across the globe: the full-length trouser, which the English infantry favored over constricting knee-breeches (bending far forward had been hazardous to the seams); the black jacket for formal attire (it didn't show soot in nineteenth-century London); and the advent of khaki in workaday clothes. Khaki, which means "dust-colored" in Hindi, was first introduced in 1848 for British regimental uniforms in India; later the color was adopted by the entire army (and later still by legions of casual-Friday office workers).

India's rajahs disdained the garb of the imperial officers, but in many regions never forcibly colonized, dark suits and trousers were viewed as the uniform of modernization. In 1871, the Emperor of Japan traded his customary robes for western-style jackets and required his officials to follow suit. When one official pleaded to wear traditional robes, a minister of the emperor quipped, "Are you still ignorant of the world situation?" At the end of the nineteenth century, Afghan princes were seen hiking up mountaintops in Highland kilts.

Illustration by Molly Crabapple

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Boots in Baghdad

As the sun set on military and colonial empires, western leaders again changed tailors. Two world wars rattled Europe's enthusiasm for martial uniforms, as dressing to affirm allegiance to the state (anywhere other than the battlefield) became an unpleasant reminder of the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini regimes. Stalin's fondness for strutting in martial attire at Yalta and later Mao's attempt to impose a civilian uniform in China did nothing to spur a revival. After World War II, as economic strength increasingly became the engine of international prestige, many returning soldiers went to work in offices, and the business suit became the uniform of the successful globe-trotting gentlemen.

Dressed to Rule is largely a history of male fashion, which is somewhat delightful in its irony—until you stop to think about it. With the exception of Catherine the Great and her regimental evening gown, very few women appear as sovereigns in these pages. To posit that men have historically used fashion to project political ambition, while women have used it for seduction would be inaccurate. The ladies at Versailles who flaunted ever more elaborate coiffures adorned with miniature boats and other baubles were competing mainly with each other; the Parisian hostesses who convened Enlightenment salons were political agents, ambitious for influence, not simply historical glitter.

But Mansel may yet endear himself to feminist historians. He's provided new evidence to ponder why, when it comes to formal attire today, men's clothes, it seems, are from Mars, women's from Venus. After reading *Dressed to Rule*, one might wonder if the distinction is as much historical as biological. Men's suits and dress shoes are more practical for marching than ladies' fitted skirts and high heels, which often oblige the wearer to hail a cab home. Perhaps if women had also been conscripted into the Prussian army, they too would have kicked off their *talons rouges* for walkable flats.

Mansel does not lavish much attention on recent years, but it's possible to draw out the thread of his argument. Over the last decade, as companies have updated their management philosophies—tradition and rank are out, flattened hierarchies and innovation are in —the business suit, with its connotations of status and tradition, has given way in many offices to golf shirts, turtlenecks, and khaki pants.

But not in Washington. Inside the federal city's unique ecosystem of power and patronage, old trends linger, and new ones arise. Since the advent of C-SPAN and color newspapers, lady senators and cabinet officials have strolled to press conferences in brighter hues—dress suits of yellow, green, peach, and red—which might look curious inside a Chicago law firm, but stand out exquisitely well in a crowd on television. Condi Rice, who favored black and navy in her academy days, now regularly dons yellow and crimson in view of news cameras.

On the sidewalks along Pennsylvania Avenue, business suits are becoming, if anything, more common and more pricey—in keeping with the vaunted formality and discipline of George Bush's White House, as well as the growing legion of K Street lobbyists now shuffling between downtown and Capitol Hill (in the last five years, the city's lobbying industry has doubled in size).

But like the fashions of all empires, this parade will someday pass. Styles sewn with politics tend to glisten and fade with the ideologies they embody. For example, Paul Bremer, as administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, sallied from Baghdad board rooms to military briefings in fine suits paired with combat boots. When visiting Bremer in Iraq, Rumsfeld dressed to match his host. The ensemble did perfectly showcase the Pentagon's strategy for occupation—minimal troop presence, maximal use of private contractors—but in recent months, stability in Iraq has proved elusive, Bremer has gone home, and American officials no longer aim to be seen ambling around Baghdad in pinstripes.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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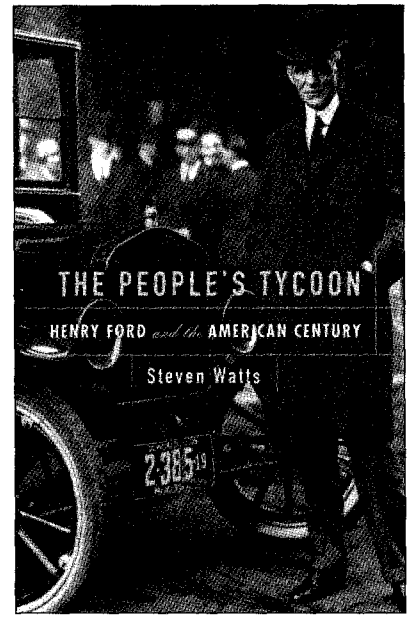
Reverse Engineering

Henry Ford created the future with his eyes on the past.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

Americans of extreme wealth have often come to be defined after their deaths by the monuments they leave. William Randolph Hearst left his castle near Carmel, a gargantuan, perplexing design that has made his legacy one of profound self-absorption and wacky materialism. Andrew Carnegie set out to soften the mean feelings millions of working-class Americans had for him by building libraries as intellectual anchors for small towns across America. The Duke family, tobacco millionaires from North Carolina, turned a quiet country college into a prestigious research university. The great Guggenheim family of New York, stern German-Jewish bankers, erected a batty swirl of a museum; the only Guggenheim we now remember is their Paris Hilton, Peggy. Henry Ford built Greenfield Village.

"In 1929, after years of preparation, Ford opened to the public a large tourist park and museum built on 252 acres in Dearborn," writes Steven Watts in his admirable new biography. "Visitors could inspect a display of Americana—antiques of every imaginable variety—painstakingly collected by Ford's agents. In the enclosed buildings of the Henry Ford Museum, visitors saw an array of everyday goods from 18th- and 19th-century America: farm implements, railroad engines, furniture, cookware, wagons, woodstoves, and much, much more. Outside, in Greenfield Village, stood many architectural artifacts—a courthouse where Abraham Lincoln practiced law, Thomas Edison's laboratories, the homes of Stephen Foster and



The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century
By Steven Watts
Alfred A. Knopf, $30.00

Noah Webster, a Southern plantation house, the Wright Brothers's bicycle shop, a gristmill, and a stagecoach tavern, to choose just a few examples—that had been purchased, carefully disassembled, and then rebuilt by Ford's carpenters and craftsmen."

This was more EuroDisney than Disneyland, a strange and didactic mass costumed as entertainment, dropped into a culture that felt it increasingly alien. The village's main street mingled vintage-styled, small-town shops ("Village Blacksmith Shop") with the shipped-in structures of engineering labs, as if insisting through the quiet fraud of juxtaposition that 19th-century values and mechanical progress necessarily went hand in hand. Ford called Greenfield Village "my Smithsonian Institute." He hoped it would draw millions.

Like Hearst's castle, Greenfield Village makes a telling monument, a marker of the nervous tension its maker felt between the 19th century and the 20th. The automaker had been a great—perhaps *the* great—booster of the emerging American middle class, setting his factory wages so high and pricing his Model T so low that millions more Americans could afford the markers of what had been luxury, and becoming a hero to the flowering progressive movement in the process.

To the extent that the United States is a literary experiment, this is the nub of it: What happens when you give great wealth and social power to a group that had not been born into it? Ford was disappointed by the early returns. World War I made it clear that modernity was moving away from the automaker's version of Eden rather than back towards it. In the 1920s, it became evident to him that the new middle classes had little desire to return to Greenfield Village, and roughly zero interest in a sin-free, small-town, ballroom-dancing life, so Ford put his formidable cash and influence into trying to turn the whole damn thing back. This extended, frantic thrash against the current, the last 30 years of his life, served Ford's memory poorly; he washed up, a bigoted lump, on the wrong side of history, a monument to the tragic reactionism of self-made men.

Ford's life, in Watts's telling, seems like it was lived to flesh out precisely this question—why is it that self-made men are often more committed reactionaries than the blue bloods? Coming up was easy for Ford, and so when other working class men and women didn't match his success he blamed it, like thousands of scold-prone school principals since, on their lack of drive and disciplined purpose. Unburdened by the guilt of the born rich, Ford felt free to despise the laxity of the newly wealthy, and the evil of those institutions that encouraged it. Banks, dance halls, and car companies that sold vehicles on credit (not to mention, until

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reason broke through after decades, the Jews) fared poorly in Ford's public speeches and writings, and in a neat and quick flip, the ultimate progressive grew deeply anti-modern.

Ford's focus

Watts's book is not very complicated, and its virtues and flaws both stem from the author's decision to focus his work tightly on the sea change in Ford's public disposition and image, first a progressive and then a reactionary. A biographical bulimic, Watts spits out huge chunks of Ford's life without really digesting them. Beyond a little thin praise, we never get close to Clara, Ford's wife of six decades. The first 40 years of the automaker's life (most of his early career was spent as a troubleshooting engineer with a Detroit electrical utility) take up less than a fifth of the book. And Watts doesn't even tackle what is perhaps the great sociological question of the early auto industry: Why Detroit? Even though that city had no apparent advantage in 1900, as small, innovative auto shops were popping up from Buffalo to Daytona Beach, it had become by 1910 the Silicon Valley of its day, and the mechanics who ran the city's tinkering shops had turned into manufacturing legends, the Dodges, Oldses, and Fords. But Watts, whose interest lies elsewhere, doesn't offer any explanation.

Perhaps most frustrating in so thick a book, Watts never offers a convincing portrait of his main character. In the introduction, he writes of Ford, "The genuine man remains elusive," which is an irritating way to try to lure the reader into a 500-page biography. The result is a slightly soft, arms-length treatment, with ripped-from-the-headlines anecdotes—at times, it reads like the kind of newsmaker profile that Matt Lauer might do.

But none of this bothered me very much, because Watts has seized on the most important aspect of his subject's life: Henry Ford's complicated, difficult relationship with modern times.

In 1879, 16-year-old Henry Ford, son of an Irish immigrant turned Michigan farmer, left school and moved to Detroit. There he held down a series of mechanical apprenticeships before finally landing a steady gig as a mechanic in the central power plant of the Edison Illuminating Company while keeping up an active sideline in garage tinkering. He worked hard. He saved his earnings. He kept his work space and house fanatically clean. He was a church-going teetotaler, favored obscure Victorian-era folk dances and believed in the natural superiority of farms to cities—even in his working-man days, Ford managed to keep a country home. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the fetish of the Puritan work ethic was most present in the farming Midwest, not the commercial Atlantic coast, and Ford throughout his life talked about himself as an archetype of duty and prudence. Watts doesn't appear to have had much of a choice in writing Ford as a sort of Peanuts character, vivid in two dimensions but without much depth—ever conscious of his public image, the automaker had long since done it for him.

Combative and headstrong, Ford started two automotive companies that failed before giving up on the production of cars for the popular market in order to build a single racecar. In 1905, on a crude oval at Lake St. Clair, Ford set the world record for groundspeed in his invention, in a race that would win him national celebrity. (Each racecar had two crewmen, a driver to operate the thing and a balancer to stand on the running board, letting his body billow out around curves to prevent the careening vehicle from tipping over; or Ford's car was so hard to control that the automaker, who drove, had to cut the engine off entirely when he turned, flipping it back on during straight-aways.) The publicity that came from this great win presented his third venture, the Ford Motor Company, with a ready market: He had evidence backing his claim to be the world's finest engineer.

But from the start, Ford was obsessed—to the point of antagonizing his partners and undermining his company's profits—with building a car that the emerging middle class could afford. It took him 10 years and a fight over a patent held by a cartel of automakers that they claimed entitled them to 2 percent of Ford's profits. But when, in 1908, he built the Model T, the "$500 car" he had long dreamed of, Ford changed the economics of automaking forever. He changed too the middle class' ability to afford luxury (cars had previously been items for the executives). He expanded the periphery of countless cities throughout the United States, as the great popularity of the Model T and the equally cheap models that Ford's competitors grudgingly produced to compete meant that the middle class could move to what had been farmland, swelling walkable metropolises out to include suburbs. It was a pretty good decade.

One of the pleasant surprises of Watts's book is the way he clarifies the political import of the assembly line. I had it my head that such factories were all dirty and brutal, representing a step back from pre-industrial times. Watts makes a convincing case that the assembly line, Ford's great rediscovery (it came in 1914, after the Model T, and was the brainstorm of an unknown and unnamed foreman in Ford's "flywheel magneto" department) made things better for workers, not worse: It permitted them to develop a precise mechanical expertise, gave them a cleaner and healthier work environment, and, most importantly, through the profit margins it made possible, generated more and better-paid jobs. A year after the first assembly line rolled out at Ford's famous Highland Park plant, Ford committed the company to the Five Dollar Day—a signal national event at the time, and one that had even such muckraking lefties as Ida Tarbell (the investigative reporter who had written the definitive takedown of John D. Rockefeller) and John Reed all but nominating the great industrialist for sainthood. Ford believed, with great insight, that the viability of the consumer market would drive the economy, and so the benefits his company would win by giving thousands more people the means to buy Model Ts would more than offset the burden on the payroll. Ploys like this also made

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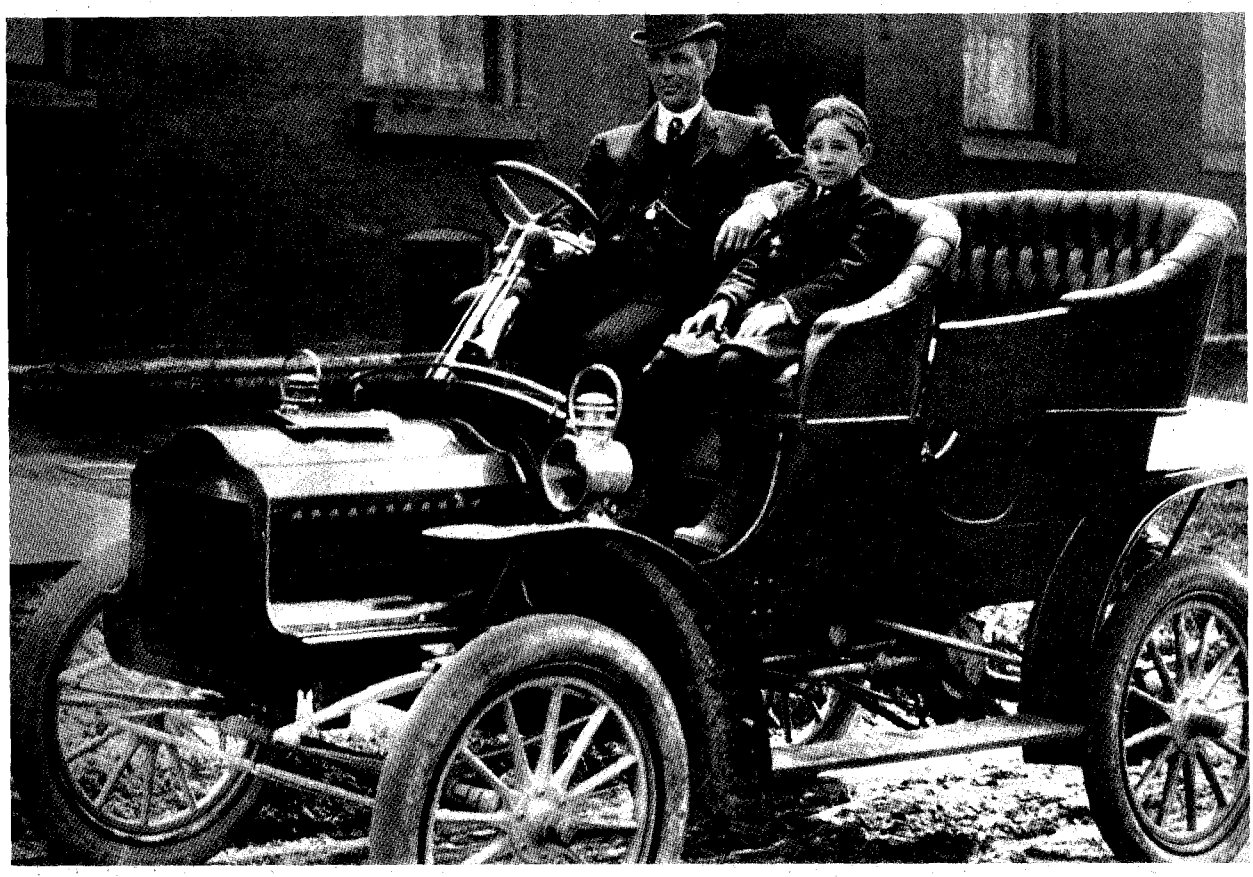

Are we there yet?

for good publicity. During the 1910s, Ford, who employed an army of public relations men to keep him and his company in the news, appeared in American newspapers more frequently than all but four other men: Charles Evans Hughes, William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. In the 1920s, he placed second, behind only Calvin Coolidge.

From the beginning, Ford kept a near-neurotic watch over his charges, the workingmen his payrolls had turned into the financial rivals of clergymen and shop-keepers. With the mathematical messianism of the engineer, he established within his company a "sociological department," a weird combination of beneficence and Big Brother, which sent investigators to each worker's house to check up on its cleanliness, to ask neighbors about whether the worker drank, to poke into his finances to see how much he was saving, and to see what time he was in bed each night. If he failed more than one of these criteria, he would be offered aid—advice on child care, treatment for alcohol abuse. If he failed several, he was canned. Like the $500 dollar car and the Five Dollar Day, this new idea was the first of its kind; unlike those two historic innovations, no other industrialists copied it. Ford had to retire the program 10 years later, when the company was cutting costs, but it earned him a great deal of cred in reformist circles. "[Cars] are but the by-products of his real business," declared the automaker's closest advisor, the Rev. Samuel Marquis, "which is the making of men."

But when World War I came, and the new gears of the modern world began to creak against one another, Ford reacted with alarm. In newspaper articles and speeches, he denounced the war as the work of an international Jewish banking conspiracy, and through the rest of his life harbored an occasionally aggressive brand of anti-Semitism. In 1915, his populist isolationism led him to underwrite the Peace Ship, a gaudy and absurd venture that sailed to Europe carrying as passengers the contemporary equivalent of *The Huffington Post*. (Ford had hoped to lead governors and political leaders on a continental peace campaign; instead, his mission was headlined by the head of the Anti-Smoking League.) In 1918, Ford ran as the Democratic nominee for the Senate from Michigan, but declared that campaigning and giving speeches were beneath him. He ran by issuing press releases, and arguing that America needed to return to its 19th century values and eschew forever foreign entanglements and wars. He lost to a Republican hack with the delightfully bumptious name of Truman H. Newberry. That same year, Ford ended up in court at the end of a ridiculous, two-year fight with *The Chicago Tribune*, whose support for defense of U.S. settlements against Pancho Villa's raids along the Rio Grande the automaker opposed (Ford considered such action a violation of George Washington's warning against foreign entanglements). He sued the paper for libel after it called him an "ignorant idealist." The paper's lawyer, Eliot G. Stevenson, proved the "ignorant" charge in court with gusto, getting Ford, at one point,

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to define "chili con carne" as "a large, mobile army."

By the late 1920s, the puritanical bent which had served Ford so well as a public figure wasn't doing his company any favors. Having long dominated sales, the Ford Motor Company now trailed General Motors and Chrysler in market share, in large part because of its founder's stubborn refusal to allow customers to purchase cars on credit. This fervent puritanism made Ford into something of a national grump during the depression; he thought President Roosevelt was a scoundrel, that his public works program was socially disastrous, and that an economic recovery was lingering just around the corner. Ford, in his public speeches and writings, claimed southern European licentiousness was destroying American culture; he met with Hitler's American fundraiser Kurt Ludecke and saw Jewish conspiracies everywhere. Ford even hated the post-war dance crazes and, writes Watts, "saw the revival of the waltz and the two-step as an antidote to the degeneration of modern American culture represented by jazz and lurid dances such as the Black Bottom and the Charleston." He even managed to alienate his only son, named (get ready) Edsel, with his sneering, unjust conviction that the boy was sensitive and lazy. By the 1940s, Ford had become a national eccentric, levying campaigns to convince the public that it was healthier to drink warm water than cold and that wheat was a "divine and complete food."

Even the circumstances of death served to show how out of touch the man had become. Henry Ford died in 1947, of a heart attack at his second home in Dearborn. The town, at the time, was being pummeled by a marauding flood that had cut off all communications with the outside world. In the midst of World War II, the defining moment of the 20th century, Ford happily sat on his farm and recalled the 19th. He had achieved in his death an epic kind of isolation.

Benjamin Wallace-Wells *is an editor of The The Washington Monthly.*

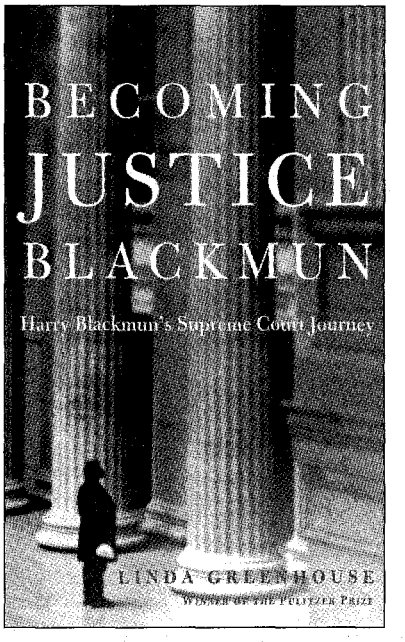
Blackmun's Drift

Linda Greenhouse charts, but doesn't explain, how a conservative justice came to write *Roe v. Wade.*

By Stephen Pomper

There is something about Harry Blackmun that makes him a sentimental favorite of many of us in the liberal bar.

Well, several things. Blackmun was perhaps the most prominent in a line of ideological apostates (i.e., Republican appointees who took a left turn) that stretched from him to John Paul Stevens to David Souter and includes (in much lesser measure) Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy. Though a Nixon appointee, he went on to write *Roe v. Wade,* and over time staked out positions that resonated with liberal policy views on issues like affirmative action and the death penalty. But it wasn't just what Blackmun said; it was the way he said it. Perhaps things will look different decades from now, but to contemporary eyes, it seems that today's left-of-center Supreme Court justices crank out their opinions in prose that is narrow, technocratic, and mostly forgettable. (Who but the most committed constitutional law geek would recognize a single line from any of Stephen Breyer's opinions?) By contrast, Blackmun knew how to speak a different language—one that was deeply moral, forceful, and humane. Sometimes he could be highly personal. When, after decades of deliberation, he decided in 1994 to renounce capital punishment he proclaimed: "I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death." And when summing up the case of a sad little boy abused by his father into profound retardation while local authorities dithered, Blackmun went right to the heart of the matter. "Poor Joshua!" he famously wrote.



Becoming Justice Blackmun
Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court Journey
By Linda Greenhouse
Times' Books, $25.00

But for all his attractive qualities, Blackmun's jurisprudence has left a mixed legacy for liberals. The legal solidity of *Roe* has been questioned by both the right and the left, and political shocks created by the opinion have not been an unalloyed blessing to the Democratic Party. Even fans of the poli-

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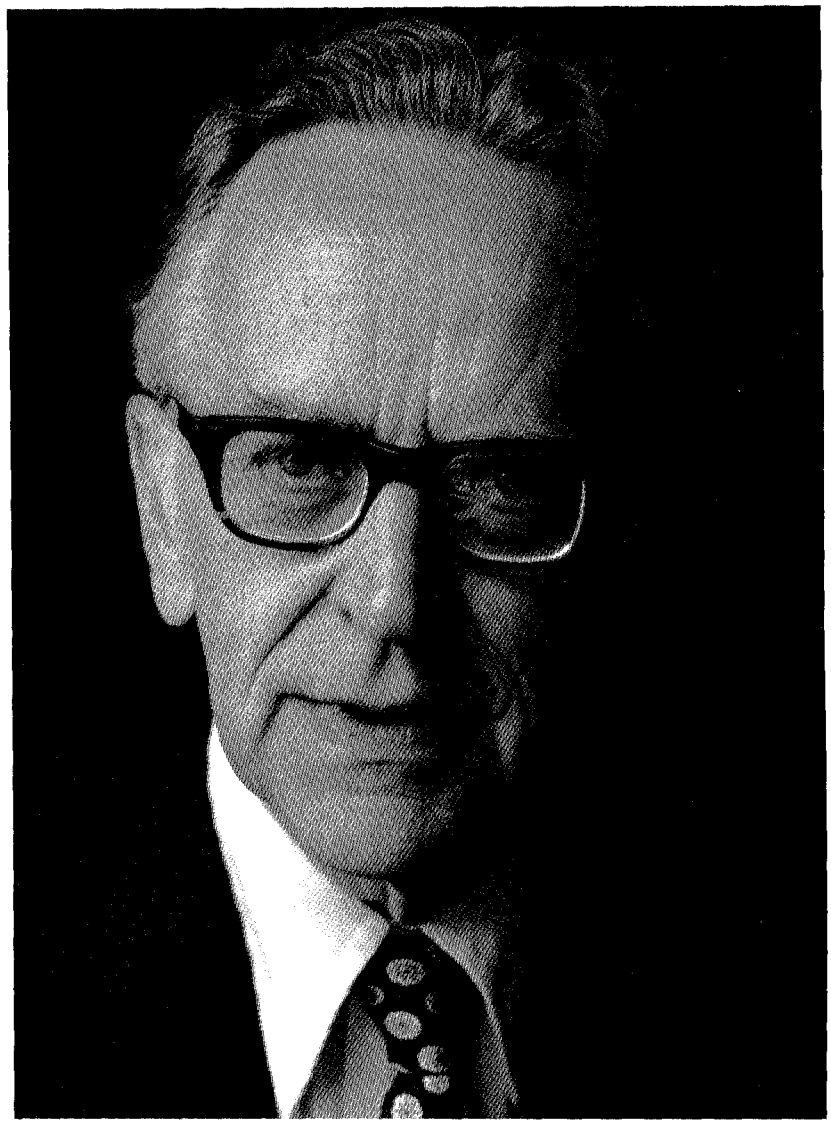
cies that undergird much of Blackmun's jurisprudence may be forgiven for asking: Did he strike the right balance between head and heart? Or, upon solemn reflection, might even liberals conclude that Blackmun reached too far with *Roe*, that his opinions could be too personal and impassioned, and that the left is possibly better off with the dryly competent—if not especially inspired—style of today's liberal justices? Disappointingly, Linda Greenhouse's new biography, *Becoming Justice Blackmun*, fails to wrestle with these questions, but her well-paced and accessible treatment of Blackmun's life is a useful place to begin the inquiry.

So, who was Harry Blackmun? As Greenhouse describes, he was an up-by-the-bootstraps son of a struggling Twin Cities merchant, who found his way, through grit and merit, to Harvard Law School. (Point of grade inflation trivia: Blackmun graduated near the top quarter of his law school class with three Ds and eight Cs on his transcript.) He was also a medicine buff and worked a professionally very satisfying mid-life stint as counsel to the Mayo Clinic.

But perhaps the single most striking feature of Blackmun's biography is that, for most of his life, he was great friends with Warren Burger. The Blackmun-Burger friendship began in elementary school (the boys lived just six blocks from each other in St. Paul's Dayton's Bluff neighborhood) and strengthened as the two men reached maturity, consistently coaching and encouraging each other to ever higher levels of achievement. For most of their careers, Blackmun and Burger were both personally and ideologically compatible; as federal appellate judges, both were wary about liberal trends in the law and exhibited a penchant for deference to the legislative branches. Indeed, they seemed so similar that when Nixon appointed them to the Supreme Court in rapid succession, the press dubbed them the "Minnesota Twins." But that all started to change with *Roe v. Wade*.

The irony, as Greenhouse suggests, is that the relatively conservative Chief Justice Burger personally selected his friend Blackmun to write the Roe opinion—probably at least in part because



(personally respecting Blackmun's medical acumen) the Chief thought he could count on Blackmun's sense of judicial modesty to keep the opinion narrow.

The central question in *Roe* concerned the constitutionality of a Texas statute that made abortion a crime except when it was necessary for "the purpose of saving the life of the mother." It was clear that a majority of the Court (including Burger and a third Nixon appointee, Lewis Powell) thought that the statute was impermissibly vague in the guidance it gave doctors about how to treat their pregnant patients. A simple opinion overturning the Texas law for vagueness was likely what Burger had in mind. But if the opinion didn't come out that way, it wasn't wholly Blackmun's doing. In fact, Blackmun's first draft was quite narrow and said nothing about whether women have a constitutionally protected right to obtain abortions.

The more liberal wing of the Court was not satisfied, however, so Blackmun went back to the drawing board, and months later (after, among other things, a research trip to Mayo), he developed an opinion which found that abortion procedures were covered by the constitutionally protected right of privacy. And even then there had to be adjustments. Blackmun at first suggested that the constitutional protection should extend with certainty only until the end of the first trimester, but he was rather easily persuaded by Justice Powell to move the mark to two trimesters. When it was finally issued in January 1973, the 7-2 *Roe* opinion had many of the qualities of a work drafted by committee.

But even if *Roe* was the product of many hands, Blackmun claimed it as his

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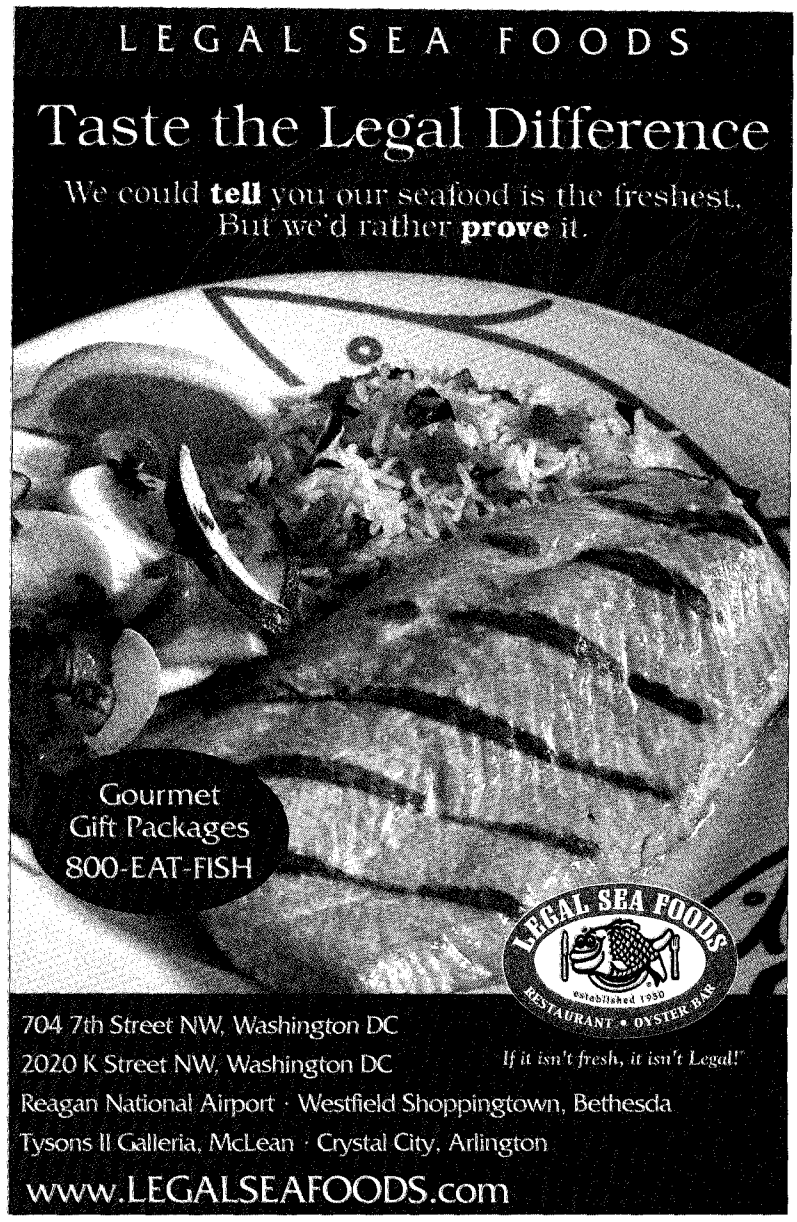
own and worked staunchly to defend it—and, in doing so, his old habits of judicial modesty began to slip away. When cases came along that probed the implications of *Roe*—questioning, for example, whether states could withhold public funding for abortions, regulate the advertising of abortion services, or restrict abortions for minors—Blackmun almost invariably voted for the result that would expand access to abortions. Moreover, Greenhouse contends that it was these post-*Roe* battles (which Blackmun often lost) that transformed his jurisprudence on everything from poverty—an issue he was forced to confront in the state funding cases—to women's rights. His jurisprudence on matters like affirmative action and the death penalty changed, too.

As a measure of Blackmun's ideological drift, Greenhouse notes that in their first five terms on the Court, Blackmun voted with Burger on 87 percent of close cases; during their last five years together, the figure was down to 32 percent. But while Blackmun's ideological evolution is striking, Greenhouse's explanation for it is somewhat lacking in ambition, and amounts to little more than a handful of statements like the following: "Warren Burger could never have suspected that in turning to his reliable friend for [the *Roe* opinion], he was launching Blackmun on a journey that would open him to new ideas and take him far from their common shore of shared assumptions."

As analysis goes, this is hardly satisfying. For one thing, Greenhouse asks the reader to take at face value the suggestion that Blackmun's conversion was simply a matter of encountering liberal ideas and deciding—*mirabile dictu*—that they were right. Maybe that was part of it, but when a person changes his entire judicial philosophy to the extent Blackmun apparently did on the Court, isn't there likely to have been something more at play? One can imagine, for example, that there might have been a liberal feedback effect at work—in that Blackmun wrote an iconic liberal opinion (*Roe*), received the adoring attentions of liberals, no doubt attracted increasingly liberal clerks, and probably found himself in a reinforcing leftward spiral. Or perhaps there was something about being on the Supreme Court that conferred on Blackmun a sense of urgency—a sense that the policy issues being decided were just too important for him to defer to principles of judicial modesty. Or perhaps it was something else. Whatever the case, a book like this should be looking harder for the answer.

Part of the problem here is that Greenhouse has relied almost exclusively on Blackmun's own papers in writing *Becoming Justice Blackmun*—a choice that dramatically constrains her ability to bring critical perspective to the book. It's a real shortcoming. For readers who are already taken by Blackmun's jurisprudence, and do not wish to have their views unsettled, *Becoming Justice Blackmun* will be a fun and comfortable read. For the rest, there is some interesting information, but precious little insight that will change attitudes or help liberals evaluate what they should be looking for in their judges. Right now, figuring out whether they would prefer more Blackmun-style justices or Breyer-style justices on the Supreme Court is not exactly the biggest issue facing the Democrats. But someday that kind of question will be relevant again. By then, perhaps a clearer picture of Blackmun's legacy will have emerged.

Stephen Pomper is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.



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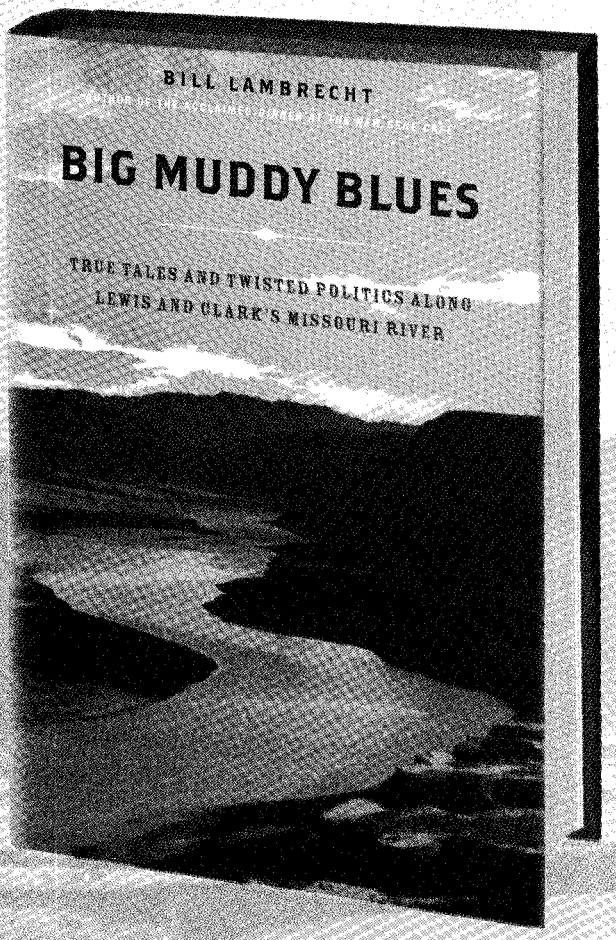

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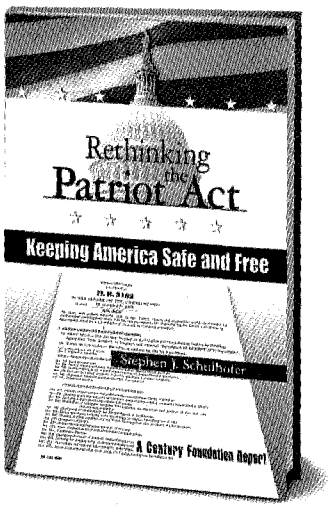

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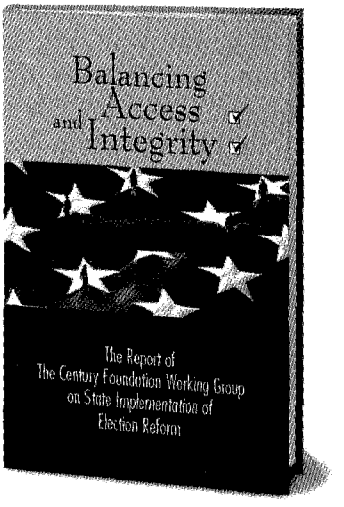

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